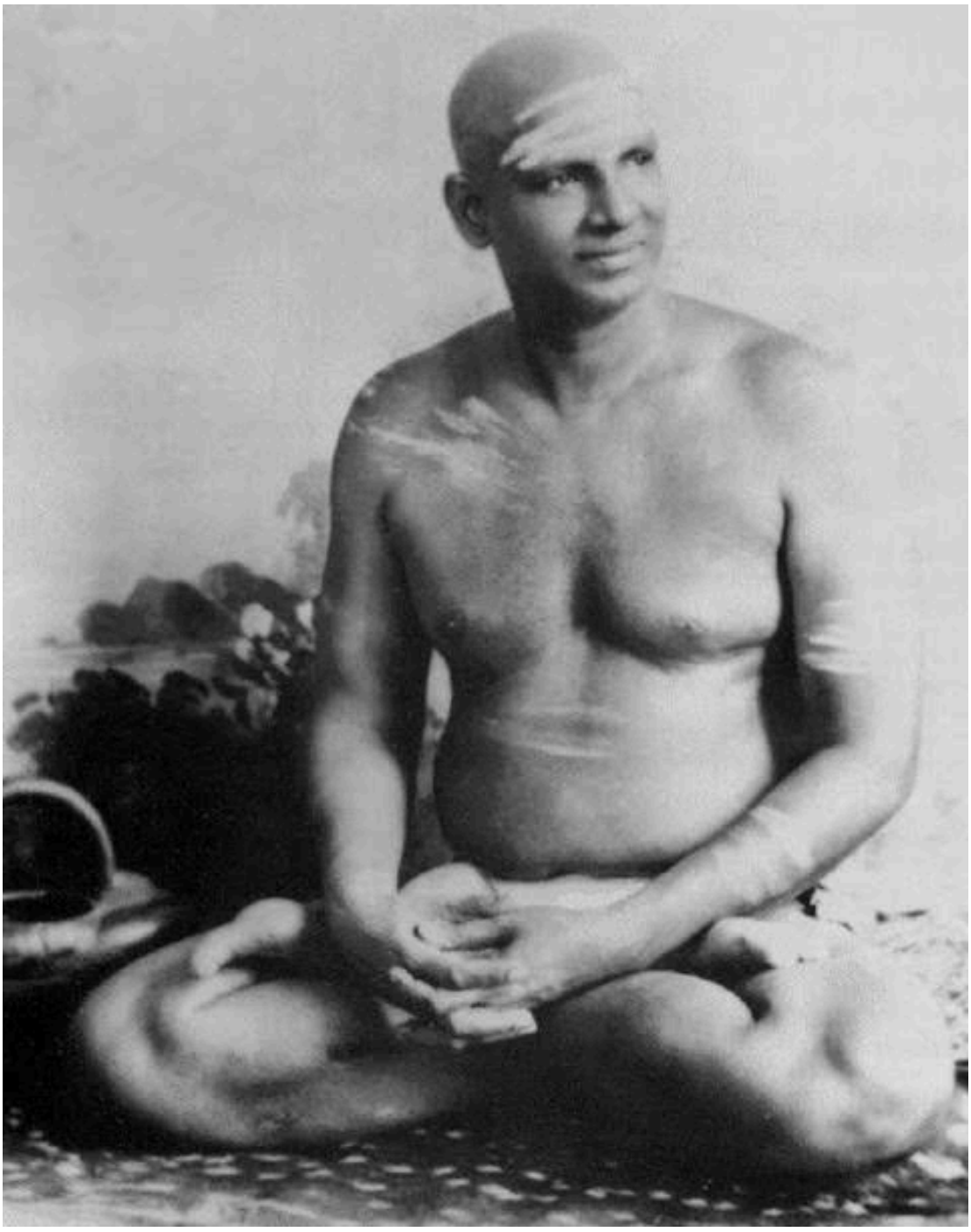

MODERN SAINTS AND MYSTICS

By
MAJOR-GENERAL A.N. SHARMA, I.M.S./A.M.C.
D.M.S. Army (Retd.)

M.B.,B.S., D.P.H. (Lond.) D.T.M. & H. (Lond.)
Hony. Commander Brother, Order of St. John
Formerly Hony. Surgeon to the Viceroy
Formerly Hony. Surgeon to the President
Formerly Fellow of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene (Lond.)
Formerly Fellow of the Royal Institute of Public Health (Lond.) etc., etc.
Director, Sivananda Medical Organisation

A DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY PUBLICATION

CONTENTS

Dedication

Preface

Publisher's Preface To The Second Edition

Publisher's Preface To The Third Edition

Preface To Fourth Edition

Publisher's Preface To The 5th Edition

Swami Brahmananda of Erawah

Pandit Sri Parshu Ram

Sain Jivan Shah

Mahatma Hans Raj

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Machhli Mukandi

Swami Achutananda

Swami Omkar Sachidananda

Principal Ramdev

Benjamin Franklin

Mahatma M. K. Gandhi

Swami Shraddhananda Sarasvati

Sir Mohammed lqbal

Swami Sevadasji

Pandit Daulat Ram

Narain Swami

Sir Anandswarup Sahebji Maharaj

Bhagat Sukhu

Reverend Father Smith (Major)

Askari Darvesh

Father Pagani

Dr. Rajah Ali Patel

Ramana Maharshi

The Saint Who Never Speaks

Swami Sivananda. Saraswati

Swami Ram Das

Sri Dharm Devi

Shri Anandamayi Ma

Gangeshwaranandaji Maharaj

Brahmachari Shudda

Jamshed Nusserwanjee

Dr. Bankev Behari

Mata Krishna Ji

Kumari Usha Bhatnagar

Kumari Vimal

Mother Krishna Bai of Anand Ashram

Yogi Roshan Nath Ji

Kumari Vimal

The Bapak

Sant Jagat Singhji

Faqir Nasir Mohammed

This Little Book Is Dedicated

To The

Lotus Feet of Paramahamsa

His Holiness

Sri Swami Chidananda Sarasvati Maharaj

GAR KABUL UFTED ZAHE KISMAT

PREFACE

No originality is claimed in this little book written at the suggestion of Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj. President of the Divine Life Society.

An attempt has been made to record the impressions made on my mind from my childhood by some of the Saints, Sages and Godly men I had the honour of meeting.

To mould one's life for treading on the sacred Path leading to our real Father and our real Home, it is essential for everyone of us to walk in the footsteps of such realised Souls and Mystics as have had experience of the Divine Ways of living.

If this humble work is accepted--I shall feel very greatly honoured.

Dadh,

19th May, 1969

A. N. SHARMA

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION

It is very great pleasure that we place this Second Edition of the MODERN SAINTS AND MYSTICS before the reading public after the lapse of 9 years. This volume from the pen of Maj. Gen A. N. Sharma, has been a source of great inspiration of numerous seekers and eager inquiries were being received about this book. We are now glad that we are in a position to respond to these inquiries in a positive way by making available this reprint to the spiritual seekers and devotees of the Lord and His holy Saints.

The venerable author, the most esteemed and beloved Maj. Gen. Sharmaji is now living a retired life wholly given to divine contemplation and adoration of the Lord. Most of the year he resides in his solitary hermitage, the Sewashram, in the little village of Dadh in Kangra region. He and his noble partner Mother Leelaji live as Vanaprasthisadhus, the ideal inner life as prescribed for those in the third stage of life, in our scriptures. They live immersed in God.

We know that new edition of this book will gladden the devotion-filled heart of the pious author and Bhakta.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE
TO THE THIRD EDITION

We are most grateful to Shri Vishnu Pandyaji of the Sahitya Mudranalaya, Ahmedabad for this present edition, the Third Edition of this unique and inspiration filled book MODERN SAINTS AND MYSTICS by the great devotee Major General Shri A. N. Sharmaji, of sacred memory. The author has passed on a few years back at the ripe age of 92. It is with great happiness that we place this latest reprint in the hands of the appreciative public who have been asking for this book ever since the limited copies of the Second Edition were finished within a short time after it was published. The noble Seva of printing this third edition is the spontaneous generous gesture on the part of Shri Vishnu Pandyaji. I have no doubt that the book will be welcomed by the eager spiritual seekers who have been inquiring and awaiting its availability. God bless the Printers and the Readers as well.

Swami bidanandy

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PREFACE TO FOURTH EDITION

In view of the demand by aspirants for the book Shree Yogi Raj Raushan Nath Ji Maharaj obtained the permission from the Divine Life Society to get this valuable contribution, of Major General A.N. Sharma D.M.S. Army (Retd.), re-printed.

Shree Yogi Raj Raushan Nath Ji Maharaj proceeded to his Heavenly abode in January 1990. This wish of his, is now carried out by his devotees.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE
TO THE 5TH EDITION

We are very happy to be able to present to the spiritually inclined reading public and devotees of God, this latest 5th edition of late Maj. Gen. A.N.Sharmaji's very popular and widely read personal account of his Darshan and Satsang (meeting with and being in the holy company) of numerous modern saints and mystics of our own contemporary 20th Century. The author who was himself a devotee and a spiritual seeker had the very great good fortune of encounter with these holy personalities right from his earliest boyhood even when he was 10 years of age. He was lucky to have a father who was a great lover of saints and who aspired for spiritual knowledge. From then onwards throughout his long life upto age 92. Maj. Gen. A.N.Sharmaji Maharaj was ever in search of holy saints and mystics wherever he was posted during his lengthy Army career. He retired as Director Medical Service in the Indian Army.

This invaluable book is a favourite with all sections of the public. This book constitutes an invaluable Satsang. Svadhyaya (spiritual study) as well as a source of much spiritual inspiration. valuable guidance and precious instructions upon the spiritual path towards God. We heartily commend it to everyone. We place this 5th edition in the hands of the public with our prayers to God and Gurudev Sivanandaji that it may very greatly benefit countless sincere seeking souls.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

Modern

Saints an mystics

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA OF ERAWAH

It was during late nineties when I was hardly six years old, that if had the good fortune of meeting him.

My father took me to him every evening. It was perhaps the first time that I remember having met a sadhu; although I vaguely remember having seen many saints occasionally staying in our house. Being still very small, I did not take much notice of them previously.

I was particularly impressed by Swami Brahmananda's tall stature, pinkish complexion, with a long grey beard, large eyes and a smiling face full of peace and tranquillity.

He lived in the house of a Vakil during the day time only.

As soon as it was evening, he used to walk out of the town followed by dozens of devotees. After going on for about three or four miles, he said he spent the night under a tree in the jungle.

It was almost daily that I accompanied my father in the evening during this pleasant walk when all sorts of spiritual subjects were talked over.

The amazing part of this usual daily walk was that he could read the thoughts of everyone of the devotees from the time he started moving out of the town.

The usual type of such a conversation was:

(1) Babuji-your child must be crying-as he is not very well-you must return home.

(2) Mianji-the time for milking your cow is coming near-please go back.

(3) Vakil Saheb-you had an appointment with some people which is long overdue-why delay it?

(4) Panditji-you are already late-your son is waiting to see you, before he goes away.

(5) Sethji-your servants are awaiting you in the shop before they close down.

(6) Sheikh Saheb- Please do not follow me any more as your wife is very ill and so on and so forth.

Thus, it was a daily occurrence that dozens of devotees had to return home, because as soon as such a thought came in their minds, the Swami would know and ask every one concerned to leave him.

Eventually he was left alone in solitude and reached his night's resting place all alone.

It was only once that five of his sincere devotees including my father decided to spend the night with him as they would concentrate on continuous repetition of the Lord's name so that not a single worldly thought would come to their minds.

It so happened that everyone had to return home as usual except these five who succeeded in not thinking of anything worldly and remained silent all the time.

As soon as the Swami reached his pet spot under a Banyan tree where he had made a pit for himself to rest at night, the five devotees were still with him.

He congratulated them for being strong enough to control their thoughts and requested them to leave him alone in peace and solitude.

Being unable to find any strong reason to stay on, they said that they would only return home if they heard of peacocks' voices. This idea was due to the fact that they had never seen any peacock in that area. In a few minutes, they saw many peacocks and heard their voices and had to return home without any more waste of the Swami's time

Another peculiar thing about the Swami was that he always met them in the mornings whichever side the devotees went to receive him outside the town, East, West, North or South.

Once a European Sadhu arrived at his residence. The Swami smiled and made him sit near him. He, then requested an English speaking devotee to shut his eyes, along with the guest and himself. After a while the Swami told the devotee that he, hereby, withdrew the information from him as he was not fit and advanced enough towards the secret path. The Swami further said that this European Sadhu had specially been sent from the Himalayas to get his next lesson on meditation as his own Guru is in a deep Samadhi, many miles from this disciple and this Samadhi will last for many years.

Another peculiar thing about Swami Brahmananda was that he went daily for begging for his meals to three houses only. If he received nothing, he starved for that day, but he never took any meals from the place of his residence. He even refused tea or milk.

PANDIT SRI PARSHU RAM

The earliest recollections of Sri Parshu Ram are when I was under ten years old in the year 1900. A noble and saintly householder who devoted most of his time to prayer, meditation and teaching young boys Sanskrit, the Gita, the Upanishads, Vedanta and other religious and spiritual matters. He was ever ready and willing to help the young folk anytime a young pupil would arrive, even if he was engaged in other things he would put aside all work and teach the youngster. To him, teaching the young people was a cherished and pet avocation. Preaching and ceremonial duties were not so pleasant to him as remaining with a few intelligent and keenly interested boys. He considered his life's mission to be the upbringing of the younger folk in spiritual knowledge, moral virtues and good character as well as a conduct beyond reproach in all dealings with others.

A few meetings and exchange of ideas with this noble personality were enough to assure one that, here was a right type of a teacher, who was devoted to his work, very helpful and popular with the young boys keen on learning the great tradition of our spiritual heritage. Sri Parshu Ram was very emphatic in developing a sincere faith in God and in accepting good and bad with a spirit of cheerfulness, coming as it does from the Lord and His Will, as a result of our previous actions in this and past lives.

His favourite advice to every one was to have a fixed time for prayers at least twice a day, morning and evening, if it was not possible to have three times a day. After singing with Bhava a devotional song or two and a few verses, one should talk straight to God in a fervent prayer for the gift of truthfulness

and sincerity in order to carry out one's work honestly and purely to His pleasure alone. The only Mantra he gave to each and every one was the loud repetition of 'OM OM OM' and gazing between the eyebrows with eyes shut trying to visualise God in whatever form one desires.

Sri Parshu Ram was a man of few words; he kept calm. cool and collected most of the time. He talked peacefully to every one he came in contact with. Contented to live in poverty. he had no desire to demand more money from his employers unnecessarily and was satisfied with whatever came in his way. in an honest manner.

His pet story was of one great scholar Kumarila Bhatta, who lived during the Buddhist period when (according to the practitioners of that time) people were not permitted to believe in the existence of God. Bhatta was passing along the road under the window of the daughter of the Buddhist king of the times. He heard her praying loudly, "O Lord, is there no one in our unfortunate city who loves You, believes in You and proclaims your Presence from the house-tops." Kumarila Bhattacharji was moved and shouted, "Devi, as long as Kumarila is alive, sincere faith in the existence of God will flourish and trust in Him will continue." The man was taken a prisoner and persecuted by the authorities concerned as a ciriminal who was preaching the worship of God. It was ordered that he should be hurled down from a hill-top. Before he was pushed down, Kumarila Bhattacharji said, "If God exists, nothing will happen to me." People were amazed at his safety, when thrown down from the high hill he sustained a slight injury in his left hand. Kumarila Bhattacharji at once offered to climb the hill and fall down again, as he had said, "If

God exists, nothing will happen to me" which meant a slight suspicion in his mind. Now he will shout, "God is always everywhere and nothing will happen to me." This was repeated and he came out of the ordeal unscathed, without any mishap. This incident spread all over the land and revived faith in the Omnipresence of God. Pandit Parshu Ram often repeated this pet story of his to his pupils and others so that their faith in God's Omnipresence may get stronger and stronger day by day.

SAIN JIVAN SHAH

I met this wandering Faqir in the hills of Jammu in 1908. He had no fixed abode and spent his nights in solitude in the jungle and hills near Jammu. There is no one who could tell how he was fed or how he was kept healthy and full of energy.

He had few small shells in the palm of one of his hands and he constantly played with them by transferring them from one to the other hand almost constantly.

People thought that he was a clairvoyant and could see future events. Always cheerful, he said he would not play shells with him if he did not wish to talk to any one who disturbed his poise.

Once in 1909 he was forcibly taken to the palace of Raja Amarsingh who was dangerously ill. The object of this forceful removal of this Saint was to make him bless the Raja. He sat in his room near the Raja's bed, but made it dirty and left without blessing the Raja who died a few days later, he refused to play shells with him.

He said again and again that the whole universe is the manifestation of God. The best way to meet Him was to control the lower self once this has been achieved the higher and purer self will transform your whole nature into that of a superior personality. This will bring you nearer and nearer to God Almighty. In every stage, the Lord Himself comes to your assistance and grants you strength enough to control the basic evil nature.

The higher godly nature can be achieved by constant prayer, fasting, meditation in solitude and loving all. Mercy.

compassion, tolerance and selfless service to all will assist greatly in getting rid of the evil ways and bad habits usually found in most of us.

He always said that every man, whatever his religion or belief has the light of God within himself. It is, therefore, upto every one to knock at the secret door in his own heart. It shall be opened without doubt, if you endeavour sincerely and regularly. As soon as your burning faith in God develops you will see Him face to face. It was a general belief in Jammu that Sain Jivan Shah would appear if you seriously think of meeting him. Actually he spent most of the time in solitude and silence but wandered round once a day in the bazars now sitting with his shells in one corner of a street and now in another corner always surrounded by his admirers and devotees. He accepted nothing from any one. He had a grey beard and a robe of dirty, torn and patched pieces of old clothes.

He often said, that fasting and eating less than your appetite will help you in developing the moral stature, moderation and control of desires.

Never ask anything from God while praying except his support for control of your lower nature and leading a life of purity of heart and truthful behaviour at all times.

During his wanderings if he saw any one doing anything wrong or hurting any one or any other act of cruelty he raised his voice and shouted his disapproval in no uncertain terms. Being fearless and straight he was loved by all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, who regarded him as a messenger of God.

MAHATMA HANS RAJ

As soon as he passed B.A. in 1885 or so he dedicated his life free to organise educational institutions started by the Arya Samaj, where religious education would form a part of the studies for the usual examinations.

He was able to start the D.A.V. College at Lahore, He was its Principal from the beginning. This college had the distinction of being one of the 1st class colleges at Lahore where the number of students was the largest.

Admission was refused to no one. The college was run with a spiritual background. The professors were mostly those men of distinction who accepted poverty and worked on Rs. 75/- a month although they could get appointments outside carrying 5 or 6 times of this amount.

It was thus that this premier Institution in Punjab was run on popular and religious lines. Mahatma Hansraj travelled extensively all over upper India carrying the message of the Vedas and collecting funds for not only the D.A.V. College Lahore, but also for a large number of D.A.V. High Schools all over Punjab. Some of them were also raised to the college standard.

It is, therefore, true that this great mystic was regarded as the Father of education in Northern India. He served free as he was supported by his elder brother who gave only Rs. 44/- a month to him throughout his life. It shows how a sincere, noble and spiritual personality can lead a life of enforced poverty and render such a selfless service of a high order-which has made his name immortal.

I was lucky to know him intimately as I went and joined his prayers early in the mornings while I was studying in Lahore first in the Government College and then in the medical college. His daily prayers, at once sincere, emotional and full of zeal, his noble habits, his humility and his winning manners always made a deep impression on my mind. I owe a lot to him for everything in life I lead in the future and his calm, serene face with a long flowing beard and kindly nature is almost constantly in front of my mind's eyes specially during prayers.

The spread of the Arya Samaj movement in northern India is due to a no small degree to his zeal, energy and spirit of leadership coupled with a simple life with true patriotism and high thinking, honesty and integrity based on truth and selflessness.

He was a direct disciple of Swami Dayananda Saraswati who started the Arya Samaj and claimed it to be a religion of the Vedas.

Mahatma Hans Raj also believed that prayers are always accepted by the Lord and he advised us daily that we must reduce our needs if we wish to live peacefully and happily in this world.

SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

I arrived in Lahore on 22nd May, 1909, to join the Government College. On the 25th May, I accompanied some college friends to hear a talk given by Sri Swami Satyananda on Bhakti Yoga at the Arya Samaj Mandir.

Every word this great saint said seemed to have come out of the inner recesses of his pure heart. The spiritual light of Self-realisation seemed to be shining all over his handsome face. It seemed that he was living above worldly entanglements and bickerings. His cup of affection for the Lord was brimming over and he talked in great ecstasy. The audience was spellbound and heard him in pin-drop silence. He talked from heart to heart, as if from his own personal experience. "Cease, from loving people and the things of the world for their sake only. Love them because God is in them, Who is omnipresent and Omniscient all the time. Be dedicated in all your actions to the Lord and reach Him by intense affection only for Him and Him alone."

By the time he finished, everyone appeared to be intoxicated with the pure feelings of love for the Lord and for the Swamiji who had, as it were, taken the whole audience to the lotus feet of the Lord.

After the talk I just followed the Swamiji leaving my companions, without saying a word to them. It appeared that I should spend the rest of my life at the feet of this great religious leader.

He did not see me and did not notice me. I followed him for two or three miles to his place and just sat outside his room on the steps. He asked me who I was, and told me to go away. I

did not have the heart to go and sat there all afternoon. He opened the door at tea time and inquired what was I doing and why was I still waiting on him. I said, "I have a strong desire to learn how to love God; will you kindly teach me." He said, "Go away now and come at some other time. Meanwhile repeat Ram Ram, twice daily morning and evening in all sincerity."

He came to Lahore often and I went and sat at his feet hearing his talks to his devotees and others. His one ideal in life was to worship God, and God alone, who has no form but all the forms, who is everywhere and in everything and who knows everything, who is just and fair to all, merciful in punishing the sinners for their good only.

His lectures on the the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata and the Upanishads were popular and attended by thousands. He travelled extensively all over India and tried to bring people of all faiths towards the worship of the one God who has no forms. To him truth was the first step towards the Divine path and love of God the next step.

Throughout his life of about one hundred years, he served all with an unselfish devotion to God. He accepted no presents from anyone. Even the bringing of flowers to him was disliked. He said, they looked so nice and lovely on the plants themselves and soon fade and wither away if plucked.

Once in 1934, at Abbottabad, I took two blankets for him as the old ones were torn. He refused to accept them and said, "A Sadhu had no right to collect things.' He lived very frugally and all his very few physical necessities were met by a portion of the funds his admirers had from the sale of his books. Almost right to the end of his physical existence he washed and

coloured his own clothes, few as they were. He always had one change and no more. This he washed daily and looked clean at all times.

Clean in body and mind, he spread the name of God with zeal and energy and is largely responsible for the present religious thought prevalent in the towns and villages of Punjab and U.P.

He was the topmost saint and preacher of the Arya Samaj for many years and was attending annual and other important religious meetings in all the towns of Northern India. As the only Mantra he gave to his devotees was 'Ram, Ram,' the Arya Samaj authorities called him to explain why he is preaching the name of 'Ram Ram,' against all the principles of the Arya Samaj. He replied that he belonged to no society as he is a Sadhu and will always go and preach to any group of people, who desired to hear him. He never actually belonged to Arya Samaj and only went to talk and preach for them as they desired it. If they would not call him he would not go and preach by himself.

After this incident, he was no less in demand. and continued his noble work of the uplift or people towards their spiritual heritage.

Having had the honour and privilege of coming in contact with him for over 50 years, I have no hesitation whatever in saying that his influence and his popularity was very marked in Northern India. He organised religious Sadhana Weeks every 3 months or so, where he had about 150 of his devotees, who remained with him for 24 hours daily for prayer, meditation and talks as well as an intensive programme carried out punctually.

Everyone who attended these Sadhanas enjoyed his stay and came of it a better man in every way.

He believed in no Ashrams and thought that a Sadhu should never have a fixed abode but should wander about from place to place leading people towards the Lord.

He disliked discussions and thought that this short span of life of a few years should be spent in meditation. prayer and free service to humanity as far as it lies in one's power.

All his books are written in Hindi verse, a study of which will show that he believed in one God who should be loved with intensity of feelings and every act of ours should be done in His name only.

From a perusal of any of his books it would appear that his study of scriptures was deep and he acted on what he preached, with sincerity of heart and single-minded devotion.

MACHHLI MUKANDI

These two are the adopted names of two young girls whom I met in 1905 when my father used to go to see them whenever they were ill.

They had a Guru, Swami Premananda by name, who was drowned at Haridwar. They adopted these names because one thought that he has become immortal having turned into a fish and the other thought that he has become one with the immortal Lord. Machhli (fish) being the name of the younger disciple and Mukandi, the older one, believing that he has become Mukund.

Every morning, may throughout the day, the Kirtan, Bhajan and Satsang was going on almost for 12 hours a day, largely attended by men and women of all castes and creeds. They sang beautifully and gave Mantra to thousands of devotees who thronged their home daily.

At this young age in early teens, I was not able to understand fully what they preached and what principles they taught but their sincerity, their devotion to the worship of God and their selfless service to humanity impressed me greatly. I was always keen to go there with my father and daily inquired from him as to the day and time he visited these aunties, so that I might accompany him. Sometimes I missed the school in order to enjoy a visit to them. They always told me to have only one person in the world whose love includes all and that is God. Love God, repeat OM and do everything for God and God alone, seemed to be the mainstay of their talk's to one and all who visited them daily in hundreds.

I learnt from them that "of all the gifts of God to us humans, Love is the greatest gift; one who does not love cannot ever know God, for God is Love and Love is God. Further, it is love and love alone that admits us into the heart of God, the only Reality in this unreal world in a way that nothing else can ever do." God will always reveal himself to us if we develop faith in Him and love for Him. He is perfect goodness, perfect Truth and perfect beauty. "In love God gives Himself to us perfectly by direct communion. Mukandi further used to emphasise daily that he who loves not his brother whom he knows, can hardly love God whom he does not know.

They used to warn everyone almost daily that visiting them was of no avail unless the people controlled their senses and ceased to run after sense objects. I did not understand this daily instruction at the time, but now I realise that they must be pointing out that the greatest stumbling block in the spiritual progress was of immorality and adultery; to eradicate this evil from the society they had dedicated their lives. This wretched habit was eating into the morals of the society at that time, but the people shamelessly condoned it, especially the middle and upper classes who should have known better and who should set an example. The talks of these two pretty young lady Sadhus were very impressive as they were pure-hearted, sincere and unselfish.

There is no doubt, whatsoever, that there has been a lamentable falling off in public morality ever since.

I think I had once a glimpse of Swami Premananda in 1903, who made me sit near him and gave me sweets and then shouted OM, OM, in my ears. Not realising the importance of his able advice, I used to repeat this without understanding it

very much. I can still imagine his attractive face full of smiles and dazzling light round it. Fearless and undaunted he used to speak straight to the people he came in contact with.

One thing I forgot about Premananda's advice to every one and that is "not to have a good opinion of yourself at any time as ego is one of the greatest stumbling blocks in man's progress towards Godhead. Do not judge yourself or others, but pray for mercy," he often said.

SWAMI ACHUTANANDA

I first met him in 1902 when he was staying in our house. He was a forceful preacher of the Arya Samaj. He knew all the Vedas by heart and thought that any other study except the Sanskrit literature was a waste of time.

Punctuality in everything was his pet habit. If he did not get his meals at the time he ordered, he went hungry.

With sweetest of tempers, he seldom criticised people as he took a philosophical view of life and did not wish anyone to be disappointed by seeming failure. He wanted people to cast off disappointments like an old garment and to be confident that in the end things can and will come right however difficult and impossible they appear to be in the beginning. If we do our best, we have every right to be sure that all things will work out in the end for good.

He always said that great adventures, great creations and great discoveries have usually been nurtured in hardships, pondered over in sorrow and established with difficulty. Most of us make the mistake for praying for the removal of our difficulties, forgetting that nothing is worth having if it comes too easily, and it is these struggles in the fields of accomplishment that makes for character.

He always said that we must discover and learn the secret of achievement of what we desire. It is not easy to sum up in a few words, but of this he was sure that the spiritual ideals have been the inspiration of thought and power, and the secret of success, and the Lord seems to open the door to heaven when we least expect it. This happens if we sincerely follow the sacred and secret path towards the Lord.

Although very learned, he spoke in simple words appealing to the people to become sincere and serious regarding their spiritual path and to get less entangled day by day in the worldly attachments.

On your birthday, he said, inquire if you have gone nearer to God or away from Him and when beginning an action, think first if it will take you towards God or away from Him.

SWAMI OMKAR SACHIDANANDA

Swami Omkar Sachidananda was a great preacher of the Arya Samaj and I had the privilege of playing host to him whenever he visited our town between the years 1902 and 1915, in that latter year the Lord called him back to His Abode. He had made a vast and deep study of Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture. He was generally regarded by every one as a great exponent of Bhakti Yoga, and his lectures and discourses were invariably on Love of God. He always emphasised the point that devotion is the easiest way-to please the Lord.

He held many discussions with the Sikh religious leaders and argued to impress upon them that Sikhism was never meant to be a separate religion; and that Guru Nanak and all the ten Gurus were Hindus. They never desired or wished their followers to discard their old Hindu religion and customs in order to belong to a new one. All the Gurus had gladly sacrificed themselves for the protection of Hinduism; and their rituals, ceremonies and other practices were exactly like that of the Hindus. He was a very loving and forceful debater who won his point by sustained arguments and reason.

He proclaimed the fact that Hinduism excludes no one but includes all the people of various thoughts and ideas, as it is based on reason and science. He often repeated the phrase *science grounded religion' in which Truth is respected and followed and everything is done by peaceful means. He asked everyone in the congregation to repeat the sacred Mantra 'OM constantly. In this he included also the children and I was one of them who were made to sit in one posture and utter OM.

Swami Omkar was of the opinion that Guru Nanak brought the old message of the Eternal God to the ignorant people of the fifteenth century. He said that God Who loves us, and in Whose love alone we can find our real peace, wishes His children to worship Him. It is He from Whom, at the beginning, all come; it is He Who sustains all and Who is the final refuge of all. Though Himself ever distinct from the creation, He pervades all that He has created, for, apart from Him nothing exists. Formless and generally unseen but yet revealed by every form that is manifest, is His Own self, beyond all thought and senses; Whom no names can name because all are His. Who can describe or correctly understand this Infinite One save His devotee, aided and inspired by His grace? Omniscient, He knows our every need; All-generous, He supplies it; All-good, His every act is for our welfare. At His bidding religions arise, prophets speak out His Will to men; they disappear and are forgotten, but He remains eternally, the King of all, adored by all creation, each creature worshipping Him according to its own nature and abilities. How can man's rituals avail to honour so universally adored a Sovereign of the Universe?

'In thousand pots is the same one air, the pots break and the same air remains, as from fire crores of flaming sparks arise and they all unite again in the fire; as from one dust heap many tiny specks of dust fill the air and again mix with the dust heap: as millions of ripples are produced from one river and they disappear again into the same water; so also from His Omnipresent Form appear conscious and unconscious beings; they spring forth from Him and are merged in Him in the end. Thus the human soul finds its way back into the heart of the Divine and the Truth is known, nay, knows Itself. One word

from a true teacher tears away the veil of ignorance and shows the oneness of the Lover and the Beloved, which is the ultimate secret of creation. All this universe is but the ever-changing waves dancing on the surface of His unfathomable depths; all obey His Will from Whom come the light and power in all that cause them to be.

'What name is exclusively His, of Whom all words are names? No words can fully describe the Infinite, no names express the ineffable glory that He is. When He alone exists, how can there be a name to mark Him out from others? There is nothing that exists apart from Him, He alone exists'.

Swami Omkar often used to say that since man learnt to speak he has vainly tried to express his idea of the Infinite that is around him and within him, but his feeble and halting words cannot reach even a shadow of God's glory. The mind itself falls back dazzled from that height, fettered to the earth, as the boy's kite cannot in reality reach the blueness of the sky. Even the vast universe itself is a tiny speck upon His robe.

'God alone conveys the beatific vision of Himself to those whom He has chosen, and then, strong in His strength, those saints of God become invincible; before their quiet gaze the terrors of cruelty and sin fade away and all joy hastens to their side. God's grace does all. He gives victory and defeat, life and death, day and night. None can resist His elect, and none can save those whom He has doomed. And He is all good, all wise as He knows all. From His hidden throne in the heart of every creature in His universe, God watches all the game that He has set to play. Being one with each soul He knows its needs, hears its silent prayer even before it can be put to words; senses the thought of mischief lurking in the depths of the wicked heart,

and yet remains perfectly detached and impartial; like the sun He shines alike on the righteous and the unrighteous. He allows the wicked to prosper until perhaps the very last act, and yet He silently guards from all real harm His chosen saints and devotees who are entirely devoted to Him and work for His glory. He gives all! Yes, He is the real King, but He is also the joyous Lord of beauty; the generous Providence who gives every moment exactly what each child of His requires.

"Those who cannot surrender themselves to His Will in all the events of their daily life, must pass through endless misery in the world. A real devotee of God can easily be recognised. Such a one is always repeating God's Name and trying to please Him alone. A devotee is always near to those who love Him, he sees God in all, acts with all in a spirit of reverence and affection, and with patience he endures all that comes, knowing that it is from the Lord. A devotee is easily pleased by the smallest kindness from another and is at all times aware of God's loving watch over him. Unshaken by joys and sorrows, wholly free from anger and hatred; he is always virtuous and kind, delighting in the worship of God, without the least taint of worldliness or egoism, eager for the humble service of the lowliest of men, such a devotee is a real Guru who can guide people to the Lord"

Swami Omkar sincerely believed that there is no difference at all between the Name and God. The Name is God Himself. Singing God's Name, and thus adopted to our powers of perception, is the only sure path through which we may safely approach Him.

He always said that the Lord is nearest to you. That you have been gifted with His presence asmuch as any other Godly or

Saintly man-the only thing is that you have to be always busy in searching Him within you. He presides in your heart in all His glory dive deep within yourself and find Him. The time is short and search-long so start now in right earnest and stop not till you have found him.

PRINCIPAL RAMDEV

Along with Mahatma Munshi Ram, Principal Ramdev was instrumental in administering the Gurukula University at Kangri.

Having taken the vow of poverty they did everything possible to organise a system of education based on prehistoric Hindu system of Vedic times where all boys were sent to Gurukulas each under an Acharya.

The Brahmacharins were taken in at the ages of 8-9 years and kept with their teachers in the Gurukula till they come of age.

This continuous company of the teachers and pupils for over a dozen years moulded the character of the students on old Vedic ideals of simple living and high thinking. The imparting of spiritual instructions side by side with modern arts and sciences was by itself a great achievment.

The boys talked in Sanskrit, discussed in Sanskrit and read the Upanishads and the Darshanas in addition to the subjects commonly taught at present in the schools and colleges. They were also given a fair amount of oral and practical teaching in Ayurveda (the old Hindu medical system of prevention and treatment of disease).

Principal Ramdev was a forceful speaker who travelled all over Northern India as the right hand man of Mahatma Murshi Ram and succeeded in not only collecting funds for the Gurukula but also bringing to the notice of the public the necessity of the Gurukula system of education by which he created a generation of noble leaders of high integrity and honesty of purpose. They will be fit to spread that great Hindu culture and tradition as well as the Aryan civilisation, and will thus uplift the society.

Being orators and forceful speakers, they will be able to carry out the messages of our saints and Rishis of yore and be instrumental in creating a group of highly moral citizens. I had heard many of his lectures. His peculiar feature was that he carried dozens of books of eminent authors of the world from place to place and had them neatly arranged on the lecture table. While speaking at the top of his voice, in pre-loud-speaker days, he continuously opened book after book to read a line or two from each to emphasise a point.

He tried to show that most of the socio-religious leaders from time to time have constantly appealed to everyone to go back to olden times-where people were more humane, more Godly, more honest and more sincere.

He sincerely believed that it was possible for Indians to bring back old times of the Upanishads and the Vedas. When I look back 40 years I still see him with my mind's eyes forcibly speaking to large audiences to follow the ideas of their leaders of prehistoric times and thus become better men and better patriots.

He had a sincere faith in God. He always preached that there exists some point where we can meet God in a real and experimental contact with His infinite actuality and it is this point of His being which depends upon His love.

Within each person there is a metaphorical apex of existence at which he is held in by his creator. In this apical mind God utters thoughts of Himself constantly. If we heed it and follow it being true to the faith in Him, we will be blessed.

If you succeed in emptying the mind of every thought and every desire, you may indeed withdraw into the centre of yourself and

concentrate everything within you upon this imaginary point where your life springs out of God-yet you will not find God. No natural exercise will or can bring you into vital contact with Him. Unless He utters Himself in you, speak His own name in the centre of your soul, you will no more know Him than a stone knows the ground upon which it rests in its inertia.

Principal Ramdev had an unbounded energy as he was never tired of appealing to people to be sincere to themselves, sincere to the society and sincere to God. Without this sincerity and faith in God no success is possible. "We cannot go to heaven to find Him because we have no way of knowing where the heaven is or what it is. He comes down from heaven and finds us and is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient. We only know Him in so far as we are known by Him." This is briefly what he always preached about and succeeded in no small measure in his selfless efforts.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Although it was impossible to meet him as he lived almost 200 years before me, his life made a very deep impression on me. It was in 1905 that I carefully read his autobiography. As this book was given to me as one of the class prizes, I felt that God has given this valuable book to me for study and guidance.

The first reading was finished in a few days although my knowledge of English was poor. The book was so fascinating that I forgot even to go to school or have my meals as I was very absorbed in it.

What impressed me most was his trip from New Foundland to New York when he was only 5 years old. All the decks of the boat were filled with thousands of cod fish which people had collected from the sea. The smell was terrible and the semi-dead fish were still showing signs of life pining for the sea.

He thought that each fish had the same soul as he himself and therefore there is no difference between the life of a fish and his own. He further thought that the mind of the fish is not very much different from his own mind-the difference is only in the body.

He made up his mind that he will become a vegetarian for life. Eating fish or meat is same as eating a human being he thought.

The thought of 'not killing' was obviously independent of any suggestions from the outside. It showed his innocent mind, feeling so deeply for the fish and decided once for all not to eat any type of animal food.

This was rather difficult for this youngest member of the family to do, as his family was to be cared for by his elder brother and they were not very well off.

Arriving in New York, he told his father and brother, not to cook any meals for him as he would have no animal food at all. This annoyed everyone as they thought that the boy had gone mad.

It was decided to give him only 6 pence a day. He spent half the amount in buying potatoes and the other half in buying kerosene oil for his reading lamp. With boiled potatoes and bread from his home, he lived for many years as a youngster and studied hard day after day.

At the age of 8 he started earning a few cents a day by selling newspapers from door to door during the morning hours. He spent his afternoons in the private schools and libraries.

Once he told a lie and was so depressed that he made up his mind to write a daily personal diary in order to practise all the virtues. He drew a chart having dates on one side and the list of virtues on the other. He sat down every evening before going to bed and tried to examine his actions minute by minute the whole day and the way he had spent it. Did he break the observance of any virtue? Did he hurt any one? Did he cheat any one? and did he do anything which took him away from God. After going over the day he daily prayed to God to give him strength to control his talks and his thoughts so that he may have the strength of character to succeed in controlling himself so that he might become a most virtuous man.

As soon as he woke up in the mornings, he sat down to prayer imploring God to give him the strength to carry out his

resolutions for the day. Every moment throughout his daily activities he never forgot his God whose active assistance he was sure of, in his progress. This sincere faith in God was by itself a very great asset in his daily life.

After a time, he felt that it was impossible for him to practise all the virtues together when their meanings were infinite. He, therefore, decided to practise intensely one virtue at a time for a week and make every attempt not to break it. He also wrote down the name of each virtue and what its definition he meant to practise in a limited way. This method was successful as he developed enough strength of mind to succeed in the practice of all these virtues.

Some of the virtues and his definitions are:--

Temperance: Eat not to dullness. Drink not to elevation

Order: Have a place for everything, keep everything in its proper place.

Resolution: Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve, etc., etc.

After a few years' practice it was impossible for him to break any virtue; This uplifted him and his work in the eyes of the public and he soon became a leader of men. He was one of the most important leaders of the Americans who defeated the British and succeded in getting independence for their country, the U.S.A. Benjarnin Franklin negotiated with powerful European countries like England, France, Germany and Italy and established diplomatic ties with them. He was never elected the President of America but was considered as the President maker.

Once he became very unpopular as some people did not like his truthful and straight ideas and his behaviour.

He invited all the notables to dinner, borrowed plates, glass tumblers and napkins. He kept 2 slices of bread and a glass of water for each guest covered with a napkin.

As soon as the dinner was announced, he lifted his napkin, munched the slices of bread and drank his glass of water. The guests were dumbfounded and thought that it was an insult. He said, "Gentlemen, a man who can live on a slice of bread and God's own water is not afraid of the opinions of others as he always tries to live the truth in his life under all circumstances."

Once his wife purchased a tiny silver spoon for the household. As soon as she showed this to him, he scolded her and asked her to return it back to the shop as the money spent on a silver spoon can be usefully spent on the barest necessities of a poor and starving man in the street.

He was not only a great spiritual leader, a social reformer, a political adviser, a diplomat and a journalist but also a well-known scientist who established his own laboratory to work in as a hobby. He was the first scientist to investigate the electric currents in the clouds and lightning and invented instruments to condense it.

From such humble beginnings as a newspaper boy he rose to the eminence of one of the foremost leaders of free America, as his simplicity of character and his conduct was beyond praise.

Having read his autobiography thoroughly, I in my own humble way, started writing a daily diary from 1st January, 1906 and continued for many years. It was an uphill task for me in the early days to sit down with the book every evening and to

remember the number of times I had broken the observation of many virtues. Gradually it became possible to follow the day's activities in a regular order so that one got used to finding out that a superhuman effort is constantly needed before one is able to control the usual simple shortcomings of one's mind.

A regular practice and a sincere prayer to God for His blessings, does help in overcoming the usual lack of control of sense-organs, even at such a young age. A most important part of the daily life was a constant care to be exercised in avoiding the company of fellow-boys specially those of bad character and of worthless habits as well as, a sustained effort for solitude and keeping busy in study and games. This was extremely beneficial in attempting to wards some progress towards a fuller and better career.

MAHATMA M. K. GANDHI

I was lucky to meet him in Gurukul Kangri near Haridwar in 1916 where he came to preside over an untouchable (Achhut) Conference

I persuaded Mahatma Munshiramji to permit me to sleep on the floor next to his room and serve him as an orderly and a servant. It was a novel experience. I had passed the final in the medical College and was then in Government Service as a District Plague Medical officer. I accompanied him on all his trips during the 3 days he stayed there. He had returned from South Africa a few months before, after a successful Satyagraha there.

He regarded all men as brothers. His faith in the future of India was not shaken. He said that all men cannot be masters but none need be a slave. We cannot cast out pain from the world but needless suffering we can. Tragedy will be with us in some degree as long as there is life, but misery we can banish. Injustice is raising its head in India due to foreign rule, but tyranny we must conquer. Evil will invade some men's hearts, intolerance will twist some men's minds, but decency is a far more common human attribute and it can be made to prevail in. our daily lives. He believed all this, and he believed above all else in reason, in the power of human mind to cope with the problems of life.

He said, because he placed his trust in reason, he placed it in the individual. He had known personal disappointments but had always an unshaken faith in the Lord, and believed that with courage and intelligence we can make the future bright with fulfilment. He was certain in his mind that we shall be able, sooner than we can imagine, to attain freedom from foreign rule

and exploitation. He has lived intimately in various parts of the world with brown men, yellow men, white men and black men and found them all the same in love and brotherhood. He said "In their countries I lived and ate with them. In my country they shall live in my home and eat with me, I believe all men are my brothers. I know when I see them sharing my home." He was thus truly a citizen of the world-and he loved all mankind.

He asked me to leave the service and join him in his sacred movements to free India but I did not have the moral courage to leave everything and join him.

The only virtue he claimed was truth and non-violence. He laid no claim to superhuman powers. He wanted none. He said he wore the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of his follow-beings wear and that he said he was liable to err as any. He said, his services had many limitations but God had up to now pleased them in spite of the imperfections. One rare quality he possessed was a confession of error which he thought to be like a broom that sweeps away any dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. He always felt stronger for his confession. He was a Saint-in real sense of the term-so selfless, so Godly, so kind, and yet persistent and strong.

He claimed that his uniform experience in all situations had convinced him that there is no other God than Truth. He had no desire for adoration and was sick of it. He had no desire for prestige anywhere and thought himself to be always a servant of Mussalmans, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs, Jews as of Hindus, and a servant in need of love not prestige.

He succeeded in defeating the British by non-violent means and gained liberty for India.

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA SARASVATI

It was in November 1911 that I had the pleasure of hearing Swami Shraddhanandaji who gave a talk at the annual functions of the Arya Samaj, Lahore, which was the centre of this great movement. I was very impressed with his forceful personality and the great capacity and powers of organisation and administration which his actions demonstrated.

As L. Munshi Ram (his Purvasrama name), a very successful advocate of Jullunder, he was one of the first disciples of Swami Dayananda Sarasvati who started the Arya Samaj Movement for the purpose of regenerating Hindu religious culture, which was in its wane in early nineties. As an ardent admirer of our ancient Hindu culture, Munshi Ram was disappointed with the system of education given in India in his days. He was strongly of the opinion that the system failed to produce in a young man an integrated personality equipped with a knowledge complete culturally, religiously and socially, but merely trained them to become petty officers and clerks.

Bubbling with a missionary spirit, he travelled all over North India in order to get some backing and appreciation for his firm conviction that the only suitable education for our young men should be of the Gurukula type, where the boys lived from the 5th or 6th years of age with their teachers till they were 18 years old. Besides, the academic education they should be proficient in our ancient spiritual heritage, having had a regular study of the Upanishads, the Gita, the Vedas and other scriptures.

As there was not much support from the public, he left his hearth and home, his legal practice as well, and settled at Kangri and started to give a practical effect to his idea of

Gurukula, putting both his sons as the first batch of students and himself became the first teacher in the Gurukula in the year 1897. Living in mud huts and having a system of hard study, the young-boys aged six and eight years tried hard to learn religion and culture. Sri Munshi Ram took a vow not to leave the village until his Gurukula became popular and a large number of Brahmacharins enrolled themselves every year in the Institution. By the year 1900 the institution had become very popular and people sent their young children to remain there for the duration of twelve to fifteen years, without ever visiting their parents. Although many had grave doubts about the success of such an ancient system of education, yet the undaunted spirit of Munshi Ram was instrumental in making it a success. Living day and night with their pupils and giving out their best efforts, the teachers succeeded in organising and running this unique institution efficiently well. The ideals of 'simple living and high thinking' taught under a strict discipline was instrumental in turning out young men who were in the forefront of the spiritual and political struggle of our country.

The Brahmacharins of the Gurukula were all clad in simple attire, a dhoti, a Kurta, a towel and wooden sandals, and a similar set for a change. The boys washed their own clothes themselves and kept their surroundings clean. The daily routine commenced with early morning prayers, regularly at 4 a. m. followed by exercise, Svadhyaya and studies according to the curriculum, spread over the day. It was a pleasure to watch the young pupils talking to each other in Sanskrit day and night and learning their subjects on philosophy, religion and culture. One felt a great admiration for such a pioneer venture of Mahatma Munshi Ram with such a great zeal and energy. One thought

that this great institution has demonstrated once and for all the advantage of the ancient Rishikula system of training of our young men in all avocations and walks of life, making them sincerely into a set of young men with a high moral character good physical health, and highly learned in the scriptures and professions they liked to train themselves in. Having visited this great Institution every year from 1911 to 1915, it was a great pleasure and satisfaction to see Mahatma Munshi Ram's dream of regeneration of our spiritual culture and to imbibe that knowledge to the young men come true. He made it into a university and he welcomed the heads of states and other administrative heads who had their own misgivings about this educational Institution where it was thought (according to the information given to them by their intelligence service) that sedition and patriotic training were imparted to the young students; but in reality they found that only Hindu culture, religion and tradition were thoroughly imparted to the students of the Institution.

In the year 1915, when his own sons graduated from the university. Sri Munshi Ram took to Sannyasa and assumed the name of Swami Shraddhananda. He left the Institution where he had been its Governor for over eighteen years and spent his all for its success. Many such institutions sprang up in Punjab and Uttara Pradesh with varying results, some successful but some had to be closed down for lack of selfless workers.

In the year I took my Medical degree the Swami asked me to examine all the students in the Institution and to render a report on their physical health. I was agreeably surprised to record that the physical standards of the Brahmacharins was higher and better than in many such institutions.

Swami Shraddhananda was an orator of a very high order, a very forceful personality and was one of the top-ranking religious and political leaders of his time, who dedicated his life for the country and worked day and night for its spiritual and moral regeneration. His great qualities of punctuality, truthfulness, sincerity of purpose and regular habits attracted everyone to him. A colleague of Mahatma Hans Raj and Lala Lajpat Rai, he created his own sphere of work away from the noise and din of cities and towns and lived most of the time in forest retreats in a prayerful and peaceful mood.

Swami Shraddhananda worked for spiritual and political regeneration of India and was unfortunately shot dead by an assassin's bullet while serving at Delhi. Thus abruptly ended a glorious and dedicated life.

SRI MOHAMMED IQBAL

He was our professor of Philosophy in the Govt. college, Lahore. The first impression on my mind of his teachings, his talks and his contact was very deep. I regarded him as a rare type of a teacher who won the hearts of his students and admirers by his sincerity of purpose, truthfulness, large-heartedness and deep learning.

Every day one got assured of his interest in his classes and the selfless affection with which he taught the students.

We used to visit his residence often in the evenings. He was always surrounded by his admirers and devotees including some experts in music both men and women

He used to sit in deep and serious thought throughout these meetings and seldom said anything. Suddenly he used to get up and start walking from one end of the room to the other uttering new songs, new poetry, new verses on God, man or His creation. The expert writers were always present there to write down what came out of his holy lips. These were invariably thoughts of rare wisdom and deep spirituality which came from his mind absorbed in mental prayer or on other important subjects like patriotism, politics, religious dogmas and love of the down-trodden. Everyone admired the outpourings of his meditations and immediately shouted "wah wah" "Wah wah".

One of his famous songs is famous throughout India. He wrote this in 1905.

Sarejahanse Achha Hindustan Hamara

Ham bulbulen hai uski, woh gulstan Hamara

Mazhab nahin sikhata apasmen bair rakhna

Hindi hain ham watan hai Hindustan Hamara etc., etc. He wrote many lines of poetry on Hindu Muslim unity and on the customs, superstitions and sectarian ideas of both Hindus and Muslims. He discouraged fanaticism emphatically. His poem on Naya Shivala is worth reading.

Privately we sat to prayer with him many a time in the evenings. After his usual prayer mentally and physically performed in his own way we heard his simple prayer to God requesting Him to make each of us truthful, honest, God-fearing and patriotic citizens who should be fearless in carrying out one's duties energetically under all circumstances and at all times. In his many lectures and talks he never said a word in disparagement of any of the other religions. He thought that they represent an immense, prolonged and heroic travail of the spirit focused on the things that matter most, equal in concentration and intensity to the toil of science which, in our day, has resulted in much material progress; but has done little or nothing in the better cause of finding deliverance from the burden of life and the dominion of death, on the other hand it has increased the burden and enhanced the triumph of the "last enemy" by providing him with a richer spoil. He doubted, if our times have done much to the glory of God comparable to great achievements of the creedmakers. Great temples were built in all countries but has that brought us nearer to God! He never abated his reverence to those and the awe they produce in our souls as we gaze at them or their majestic ruins, he did not want us to be blind to the fact that their work was wrought to the glory of God.

In all creeds he felt and recognised the human striving towards the tremendous Reality-although faintly glimpsed in all of them, whose light, would instantly possess us once we are on

the road to His realisation. He found more truth in the experienced individual and collective worship than in various creeds and dogmas.

Sri Mohammed Iqbal's greatest desire was India's real unity and freedom. He believed that we must be Indians first and then other things. He always said that religion never teaches hatred. We are Indians and India is our country.

Later on in the evening of his life, he appeared to have altered his views. The word Pakistan was invented by him as he said that the best way of peace and progress was to live separately.

SWAMI SEVADASJI

I had the privilege of first meeting Swami Sevadasji when He was known as Sukhchain Nath Chopra, a handsome young boy, very quiet, cheerful and religious in his own simple way. He used to accompany his father to hear the Gita discourses almost every evening at Pandit Daulat Ram's house.

His pet phrase was always, "Bhagwan ki marzi"-God's Will. Even at such a young age he constantly thought of the Lord's will and always tried to submit to His Will. If he was told off by the teacher, he said, "Lord's will". If he got a word of praise for his studies, he said it was due to the Lord's will, and if he excelled in games, it was due to the Lord's will.

We used to have long walks together up hill and down dale in Kashmir, whenever I went there during the annual summer vacation and I found him to be a great lover of nature. He went into ecstasy on seeing a beautiful hill covered with green trees and flowers in variegated hues or hill-tops full of snow. The reflections of trees, hills and snow peaks on the waters of the lake below fascinated him much. When he came to Lahore for higher studies, we lived together and every evening we tried to go to the Ravi river bank for passing the nights in the jungle. Returning from our colleges in the evenings, we finished dinner by 6 p. m. and changed into shorts and a sheet over our bodies and with wooden sandals on, we tried to walk three miles every evening to be in the jungle.

Sometimes we walked on the footboards between the steel girders of the railway bridge on the Ravi and spent the night sitting comfortably in the hollow of the girders. He always carried a flute and played fascinating tunes, like a master. I used

to listen with rapt attention and with a great fervour to his songs of love of God. Now sleeping, then walking in the thick of jungles, and now going to a solitary well to have a drink, then singing and praying in a loud tone, were modes in which we spent almost the entire night. As soon as it was 5 or 6 a.m. we wandered back to our house in town and got ready to go to our respective colleges. This went on almost daily. No thoughts ever came to our young minds that we were neglecting our studies and that we were not putting in regular and hard work necessary in order to get through the examinations. But all the same we were getting through the examinations year after year. During our six or seven years' stay in Lahore, we were not interested in visiting cinemas, theaters or any other places of amusement; we were quite happy in each other's company and his soul elevating songs kept our evenings busy. On Sundays we generally invited a Sadhu or a pious person to spend a couple of hours with us and have a meal together. This gave us really a great assistance in controlling the downward tendencies of our minds and helped us to keep ourselves occupied in religious talks and study of scriptures in our spare times.

During our yearly vacation we once walked to Kashmir in easy stages and enjoyed the natural scenery and the beautiful surroundings. On our way we used to give brief talks to small groups of the hill people we came in contact with, who listened to his talks with devotion. His sincerity, his love of God and his deep faith created a natural bond of affection amongst the people he met.

When young Chopra passed his B.A. examination and then his LL.B. his people forced him to start his legal practice at Sialkot. Being so honest, truthful and kind, he did not go far in his

profession and one day he ran away from home as a humble seeker after Truth towards Calcutta and then to Malaya. There, while wandering about the seashore in Singapore, he met the Director of Education who was very impressed with the balanced views and sincerity of purpose of this young man, Sri Sukhchain Nath Chopra, and appointed him to one of his colleges, where he served for over twenty years and later on he became its Principal. This was actually a period of intense Sadhana for him. He was up at 3 a.m. daily, collected flowers for daily prayers from his own garden, moving about on wooden sandals, and singing melodious Kirtans. In a beautifully fitted bungalow he passed about twelve yeas, in one of his dressing rooms, sleeping on a coarse mat every night and practically having no food at all except powdered milk dissolved in boiling water whenever he felt hungry. If any one got ill in the locality. Chopra was by his bed side to serve him. When anyone needed help, he was readily there to serve selflessly and lovingly, the Europeans, Chinese, Japanies, Malaysians and Indians there, all loved him immensely, as he served them with a single-minded devotion. While in Malaya he happened to get a book titled 'A search in secret India' by Paul Brunton, which interested him and he made a thorough study of the Book and very much longed to meet the great Maharshi whom the book vividly described. Chopra travelled to Tiruvannamalai to have Darshan of the Maharshi. Sri Ramana Maharshi liked him, and during one of his visits to the Ashram, Chopra went into a trance in the benign presence of the Maharshi, when he saw himself as a small boy holding the saint's hand engulfed by a blue dazzling light. Ever since he was accepted as one of Maharshi's disciples.

During the 2nd World War, Subash Chandra Bose made him a colonel of the I.N.A. in Malaya and entrusted him with the duties of training the young I.N.A. officers. Later, he was assigned by the Japanese on a secret mission along with a dozen others and was sent to India in a submarine to create disturbances and landed in Cutch. His intense love of his country and the people made him undertake this assignment at the risk of his very life and the 3rd degree methods used by the then British failed to force him to divulge any secrets. Eventually he was tried by a Military Court (Court-Martial) and was sentenced to death. He was to be hanged on 17th of May, 1945, but this did not perturb his mind due to his complete faith in God, which stood him in good stead at the last moment. Somehow his sentence was commuted to transportation for life. The late Prime Minister, Sri Jawahar Lal, who knew him well, released him from prison in the winter of 1946.

Chopra lived the life of a Sadhu while still in Singapore, and on return to India, as a wandering Sadhu, travelled all over the land, preaching Sanatana Dharma to all who cared to listen to him. Having undergone untold bodily sufferings and self-imposed hardships all his life, he used to go on pilgrimage to snow-covered regions of Gangotri and Jamnotri in the Himalayas every summer, organising Kirtan, Bhajan, meditation and Satsanga everywhere, and this noble work is being continued.

The site of the Ashram built at Dadh (in Kangra Valley) was selected by him and he stayed there for three years to build it, working hard for long hours. He started Satsanga and worship of the Lord in the tiny but beautiful temple he built in the jungle and visited the village all around even in severe winter so as to

organise the Ramayana and the Gita discourses every year which were attended in large numbers by village folk. Having given his all to the people who worship the Lord with a whole-hearted devotion, he spends all his time and energy in their uplift, both morally and spiritually, and has no fixed abode for himself anywhere, having given up his own Ashram at Dadh.

This noble soul, Sri Sevadas (Col. Chopra), who has a magnetic personality, is attracted by everyone who comes in contact with him and is held in high esteem for his sweetness, humility, simplicity and selfless nature. Truthful and honest to the core, this great Yogi in the path of Bhakti, has made great strides towards Godhead. Clean in body and mind, with a flowing grey beard, he reminds one of our Rishis of Yore, whose first duty was to lead householders towards God.

His constant advice to everyone is to relinquish all desire.

leading their lives and doing all their duties ordained by the Lord, not affected by the sense-objects. This constant watch over the activities of the mind and its control will gradually purify one's heart and the seeds of desire will disappear.

When the heart is thus purified, the attachment to sense-objects vanishes and he attains the knowledge of the essence of God, and his mind ceases to waver in the face of success-or-failure, joy or sorrow, and differences due to caste, religion, status in life-that is, he becomes absolutely steady and his equilibrium remains undisturbed under all circumstances. This is the real Divine quality of absolute bliss which is also called Brahman or Moksha. He considers that the steps leading towards the attainment to dispassion and detachment from the worldly desires and their sense-objects are:

1) Faith in the master and the sacred books. 2) Practising in all sincerity a mode of life which leads to devotion and understanding of the Lord.

3) Steadfast attempt for the attainment of wisdom and knowledge of God.

4) Search for Truth, and truth alone, because truth is God.

5) Worship of the Lord of all Yogas, the fountain head of everything spiritual. 6) Keeping company of the Saints and constantly listening to the stories of Him and His creation.

7) Having no attraction for the association of people who are engrossed in this world of sense-objects.

8) Reducing your needs to the minimum and collecting those articles only which are essential in a spirit of detachment (renunciation).

9) Prefer solitude and meditation on the Self.

10) To hurt no one.

11) Complete concentration towards the welfare of one's real Self i.e., constantly discarding all things or associations which are an obstacle towards the realisation of Self.

12) Enjoying the nectar which flows through the sports (Lilas) of the Lord, the company of Saints and the anecdotes of the Lord.

13) Observing Yama and Niyama for the purification of one's Self.

14) Endurance of the pairs of opposites and increasing devotion towards the Lord.

15) Be straight at all times no deception. no pride, no vanity, no temper, no conceit, no crookedness and surrender to Him at all times. This will result in humility and loss of Ego bringing the sincere devotee in front of the Lord.

PANDIT DAULAT RAM

When I saw him first time in 1908, he impressed me as one of the rare devotees of the Lord, as he was very gentle, peaceful, loving and spiritual.

It was to his Gita class that my father took me after dinner.

He had always a distant look, appearing to be attentive to something above and beyond the world and perhaps seeking something beyond the field of vision, of which the human eye is not capable.

He never seemed to hurt anyone and conveyed his instructions in a manner which could not be egoistic or annoying. He enjoyed the discussions on a given line of the Gita and gave his comments which appealed to everyone. This they gladly accepted.

In spite of being a very high official, he considered himself to be the humblest of men, and he rightly held that humility is a virtue one is born with. It is a way of life.

Whenever I went home to Kashmir on vacation, I never missed his Gita classes. He had five or six dozens of the book for the use of the members of the class, and it was always a great joy hearing various thoughts and comments of the people ending with his pleasant ideas on the particular Sloka. He always emphasised that perhaps Lord Krishna meant it to be read in a particular way. It appeared that at the time of meditation, he put it to the Lord if he was not clear on any point and the Lord's answer satisfied him completely. There was never any doubt in my mind that he had contact with the Lord.

Clean of mind and body, his talks were frank and to the point. People said that everyone hears the Gita, but Pt. Daulat Ram lives it every minute of his life.

H. H. the Maharaja Pratap Singh of Kashmir often visited his house to see "Baba Balika", a Sadhu who lived with him there. Baba Balika was a very advanced Yogi who never talked to anyone, but only smiled when any questions were asked by the visitors. The strangest thing was that they went satisfied as he seemed to reply mentally which the people claimed to have understood. He seemed to be a clairvoyant, and when anything was to happen, he made signs which were easily understood by the person or persons concerned.

I also visited him fairly regularly during my vacation from 1908 to 1915, and always found him to be a most fascinating and rare type of personality who was happy and contented, and who conveyed his ideas to one and all, without ever uttering a word from his mouth.

Eventually he shifted to the palace. Whatever meals His Highness had, were sent to "Baba Balika" at fixed hours. He never touched any. Day after day, the old meal was removed and the new one put in its place.

Whenever he felt inclined for something to eat, he walked to a bakery or restaurant and just took and swallowed a bit of what he wanted.

His eyes were large, divinely intoxicated and magnetic. It seemed that with one look he found everything about you and had such a kindly look that it gave an impression of the fact that after a long search one has reached the life-long object of his

goal and that now this great saint will take you to heaven under his own wings.

Sitting day after day under his feet, one felt contented and uplifted and thought that nothing more is needed any more in this world, and that, under his blessings, things will automatically happen, which will grant success in life and in the secret inner path.

It was usual for Pt. Daulat Ram to have a saint as his guest. quite often. As a matter of fact, anyone who failed to get any accommodation in Srinagar brought his kit to Pt. Daulat Ram's house to stay there for a few days, without even knowing him. His house appeared to be an abode of God where everyone was welcome at all times, with open arms.

After the office hours it was usual for many of his friends, colleagues and others to drop in for a refreshments, a cup of tea, milk, or cold-drinks, on their way home.

It was usual for him to live in the thought of God every moment of his life in spite of his official duties and the household organisation.

Everyone thought that his householder's life was like a lotus-flower floating in the Dal-lake without touching the water of worldly entanglement and worry. His faith in the Lord was unshakable and every action of his appeared to be the will to please the Lord only.

While working in his office in January 1900, he dozed off and dreamt of a little girl who said, "I am being born in your house. I am the daughter of Vaishno Devi. My mother does not give me any cereal food to eat. I am going to be born at your place so that I may eat to my heart's content." Pandit Daulat Ram

suddenly felt pleased and got on to his bicycle to go home. He told his mother, "A great Devi is born to us. We are lucky." The mother replied that nothing has been born so far. We are still expecting a child.

Pt. Daulat Ram's father, Pt. Balakrishen had a similar dream in his village in the Punjab, and he went and related it to Sant Malu

Ram, a Self-realised simple soul living there. He said, "Do not worry; because a real goddess is born in your family.

She will be followed by two sons in course of time." This proved true.

This daughter is no other than Lilaji whose whole life has been a service of dedication and loving kindliness to one and all. Always busy in prayers and her household duties, she has never desired anything except selfless service to her relatives and everyone else she came in contact with.

Once, a terrible fire burnt most of the houses of poor Kashmiris living near him. He went there at once to their rescue and saved as much of their property as could be possible. forgetting his own house and his luggage. When His Highness heard this, he remarked, "Here is a real Bhagat of Lord Krishna, who alone serves Him and his people, forgetting himself and his own things." The people always thought that his company was peaceful and divine at all times.

He never believed in visiting any places of pilgrimage and thought that searching the Lord within is always the best pilgrimage one could have.

He was a man of few words, but always spoke to the point. He established the Sanatana Dharma Sabha in Srinagar and was its President almost to the end of his life.

His comments on the Bhagavad Gita were deep and meaningful. In order to prevail upon him to write his commentary. I had sent him the whole Gita, writing stanza by stanza with its word-to-word-meaning and the original text in Sanskrit, leaving two blank pages for each Sloka, begging him to write his most wonderful commentary on each line. He always replied that he was approaching Lord Krishna to bless this work and he would start writing as soon he got a hint from Him. This was sent again and again three times in 20 years but I was not fortunate enough to succeed in making him even to start on this work.

I once wrote to him that the sands of time are running fast and he should not deprive us of his knowledge of the Gita which he had studied daily for 60 years; but this, too, failed to move him. He was busy for every moment of his life in working for others, and had no chance of sitting down and writing his experience of his deep study of the Bhagavad Gita.

He always warned us that if India gives up spirituality and her tradition, she will perish. It is this spiritual asset which has made India a living reality, unlike other civilisations which have perished. Ancient Greece and Rome flourished for a time only as they had little or no spiritual thought continuously. Nations lacking in nothing by way of material advancement and worldly power are finding their foundations shaken and are struggling to discover spiritual values to stabilise themselves. If things are based on mere intellect of man, something fundamental is always lacking, as the only stabilising force is selfless service and spirituality. He carried his life's message of the Gita every day, nay every moment of his eighty years of noble life, wherever he went.

NARAIN SWAMI

In the year 1911, I met Sri Narain Swami in the beautiful Kashmir valley, the first disciple of Sri Swami Rama Tirtha, who accompanied him to Europe and America and later went again by himself. When Rama was a professor of mathematics at F.C. College, Lahore, Narain Swami was one of his pet pupils. The boy was so impressed by the nobility and spiritual personality of Rama that he decided to remain with him all his life. It is from the practical Guru-Bhakti of Rama towards his Guru, Dhanna Bhagat, that Narain Swami had a practical taste of the depth of devotion to his Guru.

Rama came from Muraliwala, a village in Gujranwala district, from where he passed his 5th vernacular examination. His father took the boy to Gujranwala for further studies and decided to leave him with 'Bhagat Dhanna, who lived in a mud hut outside the town and spent his time in reciting Tulasi Ramayana in prayer meetings. In order to safeguard the moral and religious background of Rama Tirtha, the father thought that the uplifting company of a Brahmachari like Dhanna Bhagat would be an ideal thing for his son. After a few months, Rama developed an intense longing for his Guru, Dhanna Bhagat, and started his spiritual Sadhana under his direct supervision. During Durga Puja (Dussera festival) Dhanna Bhagat was invited by some village folk to recite Ramayana from village to village while Rama was away to his home for the holidays.

Rama was then only nine years old. He heard that his Guru was giving talks on the Ramayana in a certain village. He walked for seven miles to have his Darsan and hear him recite the Ramayana. But when he arrived there, he found that Bhagatji

had shifted to another village five miles away. He walked another five miles only to find that the Guru had just then gone further away to another village. He then travelled another two miles and wrote a post-card to the Guru stating that he was sinful and unlucky, as he failed to have a glimpse of his Guru. It appears that he always wrote two post-cards; in one he addressed his Guru as 'a Lord of his heart, pure, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient' and in another he disclosed his intense yearning for his Darsan. Fancy a boy of nine years walking about twenty-eight miles (we are told, all through in a day), for a glimpse of his Guru whom he had seen only three days earlier.

Later, Rama, on being appointed a professor, wrote to his father on Devali day, saying, 'Father, congratulations and please bless me and congratulate me a thousand times today, as I have given myself away to my Guru, Dhanna Bhagat, and whatever I possess now belongs to him. On the first day of every month I shall send my whole pay to my Guru If you need any money, please approach him in future and not me, as I do not exist, only he exists. To me he is my God, my Guru, my all. You sold me to him for ever and ever.' At each University examination, he wrote to his Guru daily in the evenings and implored for his blessings, with a sure belief that it was not due to his ability to answer his question papers that he would pass his examination but through his Guru's blessings. If the Guru wanted it and blessed him, he would pass, otherwise not. Such a faith in the powers of his Guru moulded his character from such a young age that he later distinguished himself as one of the foremost saints of his time.

Such was the mental state and physical behaviour of this worthy disciple, Narain Swami, of the worthy Guru, Rama Tirtha. When Rama Tirtha became a Sannyasin, Swami Narain accompanied him to the jungles of Rishikesh. On the day of the departure, it has been said, the wife of Rama protested that as his wife she must accompany him through thick and thin wherever he went, Rama replied, 'As my wife, you have every right to accompany me in such a laudable search for God.' Next day, Rama, Narain and Mrs. Tirtha Rama and their two children formed a party which left Lahore on renunciation of the material comforts of their home. On arrival at Rishikesh and beyond Lakshmanjhula, Rama and the party sat down in the jungle. between the beautiful bushes thick with foliage and the sandy banks of the Ganga. The children were crying on account of hunger. The stinking nettle was growing wild. Under instructions from Rama, Narain removed quite a lot of this and put in an earthen pot to boil. As soon as it was completely boiled, Ram enjoyed immensely drinking of the herbal soup and eating the cooked leaves of the Nettle Mrs. Rama got disgusted and requested to be allowed to go home to her village, as she could not possibly bring up her children among mad sadhus! Narain thus, escorted the lady and children to the railway station and put them in the train to Gujranwala. That was the last of the householder's life for Rama and Narain.

The pet phrase of Rama and Narain in those days was: Iko Alif tere darkar Ilmo bas karin O yar' you only need one God (Alif); stop reading all books and acquiring all kinds of knowledge. After visiting various parts of the Himalayas, Rama and Narain went to Japan and America, a couple of years after Swami Vivekananda's visit. They were welcomed everywhere

enthusiastically, and they gave free talks in many of the towns and cities of America, wherever they were invited to deliver lectures. Some sort of divine aura that emanated from the handsome face of Rama (the result of intense Sadhana, noble spiritual practice of service, worship and meditation) acted as a magnet drawing everyone to him, keen as all were on learning practically the truth he preached. Rama's style of expounding spiritual subjects was always attractive, cheerful and impressive. It went out from his pure and loving heart to the hearts of everyone who became keen and receptive in order to learn and practise his precepts. Returning to India, Rama and Narain settled down on the banks of Mother Ganga, a few miles above Lakshmanjhula, where Rama was realising the object of his birth on this earth and mentally becoming one with God.

On the day of Devali festival, in the year 1905, Rama was writing an article for the 'Zamana Magazine' of Lucknow on the important subject of 'Self-realisation'. The last paragraph was something like this: 'Oh Death, take away this body. I have infinite number of bodies to live in. I shall shine in the rays of the Sun. I shall live in the light of the Moon. I shall live in the Wind, I shall dance in the hilly brooks. I shall fly with the birds and the honey bees. I shall live in the fragrance of the rose. There I go and return again. I neither brought anything with me nor took anything away. I go, go and go.' After this he had a deep trance, tears rolling down his cheeks. The servant went up to the glass door of the Kutir (room) and saw the Swami in deep trance. He went up at about 1.00 p.m. again and opened the door slightly. The Swami smiled and said, "You have come three or four times. What is the matter?' He replied, 'it is 1.00 p.m. and Bhiksha (meal) is ready. Rama asked, "Have you

eaten? 'No,' he replied. 'Why?, the Swami inquired. 'It is Devali, and I shall eat after a bath', the servant replied. The Swami said. 'I shall also have a swim on this great day before the meal. So, Rama went and jumped into the river as usual. The current was swift and he lost control. The servant saw this and cried out, 'Swamiji is being carried swiftly away with the current and has lost control. The Swami shouted back, 'Do not be anxious. God's will be done. In a few seconds he failed to control himself in. the swift current and was carried away. The servant who was stupefied, saw how Rama with effort managed to sit and shout loudly thrice Om Om Om' and attained Jala-Samadhi, Rama was born on Devali day and left his mortal coil on the Devali day. It is rather difficult to say if the last paragraph of his article written an hour before on 'Death' had anything to do with the inner knowledge of his passing away a little later.

Narain had carefully collected all the Swami's notes and diaries and was keen to publish his works. When I met him in Kashmir, after a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Amarnath cave in August 1911, I had invited him to stay with me in Lahore where I was studying medicine. Narain stayed for about six months and worked hard on the manuscripts.

As Dhanna Bhagat was still alive and living in Gujranwala, about thirty miles away, I accompanied Narain Swami on this pilgrimage to meet the Guru of Swami Rama. Old and cheerful, living in the same old hut, he had kept over one thousand two hundred letters of Swami Rama, written to him during his life. He had kept them in an earthen vessel (Ghata) carefully covered with another earthen pot. We read with all eagerness each one of these letters which were written from the time Rama was nine years old. It clearly showed how his mental

state had gradually developed till he became one with his Guru and the Lord. The last letter was blank, excepting the word "Om! Om! Om!" In spite of our earnest and humble requests, Dhanna Bhagat refused to part with the letters. So he was prevailed upon to accompany us to Lahore in order that some of these letters may be printed in a book-form. Once the complete works, 'In woods of God-Realisation' were published in four volumes, many friends and students sold these at one hundred copies a day in the streets of Lahore, which enabled Swami Narain to publish the books in separate volumes. Later the Swami shifted to the Marvari gili, in the heart of Lucknow, where all of Rama's works were published. Like a loyal pupil, Narain was instrumental in bringing out the Vedantic thoughts of Rama to the notice of the world through publications.

Finally a word about Dhanna Bhagat, the master mind who assisted Rama Tirtha towards the highest state of God-intoxication and realisation. This frail little Bhagatji was full of vitality and energy. He worked all day without stop and looked after his physical needs himself, as he had no servant or disciple with him. Rama Tirtha lived with him only upto t the age of fifteen years, and then shifted to Lahore. During this period he took active part in all what Dhanna Bhagat did. Dhanna continuously repeated, 'Rabji'-O Lord! Whatever work he did, this phrase was on his lips. If anyone wished him 'Namaste in the morning, noon or night, he only answered 'Rabji'. Mentally and physically he showed that everyone was his own Lord and Master and there was nothing a man possessed physically which could make him elated. A few minutes in his divine presence were enough for one to see a rare manifestation of the Infinite, who had risen above the usual human shortcomings

and had succeeded in subduing the turbulent sense-organs once and for ever.

It was entirely due to the influence of Swami Narain that Vedantic thought became uppermost in our minds. While the complete works of Swami Rama Tirtha were in the printing press, he asked us to buy a complete set of works of Swami Vivekananda, which we studied carefully under his guidance and started practices in Raja Yoga, under his supervision. Every four hours we practised Pranayama throughout the twenty-four hours, whether at home, in the college or on the banks of the 'Ravi'. In addition to this, we made a list of thirty-six virtues and wrote the definition of each so that we knew what we were practising. We used to sit down every evening after prayers and carefully filled this daily examination chart, which also showed where we failed. The next morning we prayed and asked for the Lord's help to have strength of mind and character, enough to control our thoughts all the day, so that we might not break any of the virtues. This daily diary kept individually for years did assist our brotherhood of five to succeed in controlling ourselves from breaking any of the virtues to a large extent. The people called us 'Panch Pyare' (five dear ones). For all this we were deeply indebted to Swami Narain who was ever ready to correct us and guide us.

SRI ANANDSWARUP SAHEBJI MAHARAJ

He was the fifth Guru of the Radha Swami faith established at Dayalbagh, Agra.

As a signaller in the telegraph department at Ambala, Sri Anandswarup was a very advanced Yogi in "Surat Shabad Yoga" as described in the Radha Swami faith. This faith was started by Swamiji Radha Swami at Agra in the 19th century. He described one of the old Hindu systems of Yoga where deep meditation and concentration is practised after a period of inner purification by the mental repetition of Lord's Name. Gradually you start hearing beautiful musical sounds and your concentration becomes deeper and deeper. It is said that while the fourth Guru, Sarkar Saheb was ill in Bihar, Anand Swarup visited him. The Guru dropped his body and left for his heavenly abode.

While following the funeral procession, Sahebji was in deep thought and his turban was gradually falling from his head over his neck. When people noticed his staggering gait, someone supported him by the arm. bring

As soon as the funeral pyre was lighted, he suddenly shouted "Char gai Char gai" (the Spirit has gone into me; i.e., the Guru's spirit has come into my body). While the Guru's body was burning, he ordered thousands of mourners present at the cremation ground to sit down. They all sat down and he led the prayer to God, saying: "I shall devote my life in leading on the followers of our faith towards You Lord, as you have thought fit to make me worthy of this great leadership."

From then on in 1911-12, he never looked back. He reorganised the Radha Swami colony at Dayalbagh, Agra, where he not

only started regular hours of prayer and meditation, but held his public Satsanga every evening, appealing to the devotees to be sincere, loyal, truthful and honest; to have clean minds and clean physical bodies.

He had a very great hold on all his followers all over Northern India and carefully kept accounts of the donations. These he utilised in organising limited concerns like a milk-dairy, a machine tool factory, a cloth mill, an electric shop and various small scale industries. His powers of organisation and administration and discipline were of a very high order. In a few years he succeeded in creating a colony of spiritually inclined honest and loyal devotees into a large group of industrious people who were advanced both spiritually and materially and had succeeded in getting rid of poverty.

He opened schools and colleges and thus created Institutions where the boys and girls were educated, trained and given professional work suited to their inclinations and desires.

Many high officials, governors, and other high-ranking persons visited this colony of selfless workers, full of initiative and enthusiasm, who were successful in worldly achievements and welfare as well as in their mental and spiritual well-being and devotion to their Guru and God.

The methods of daily worship are kept secret and no one will either discuss or explain them to you unless you adopt the Radha Swami Guru as the only one, with whose help and guidance you can attain the highest state of salvation and union with the Infinite. They have various personal beliefs, one of them being that anyone who takes him on as his Guru will have

his future secure and will reach the highest state of Godhead irrespective of whether he deserved it or not.

After reading some of their books on the devotion and loyalty to Guru, I was so impressed that in 1915 I travelled to Agra to get the initiation. On arriving at the station. I drove straight to Dayalbagh and got initiated. I was so impressed by the devotion and fervour of hundreds of devotees who were there, that I started the Sadhana under his direction in earnest. I was so occupied with this continuous Sadhana in its early stages that did not care to leave my room for any other purpose. I did not visit any places of interest in Agra and not even the Taj as I thought that the progress towards the inner secret and sacred path was the first essential for me; other things can wait. After three days' stay, during which period I felt happy and contented, I took a train towards the north. A few months later, a second call came from Sahebji to visit him again for the next stage of initiation, and I meekly travelled again to Agra to meet him. Sahebji was a great spiritual leader of hundreds of thousands of our countrymen, but he was also keen on raising the lot of our poor countrymen. He always exhorted us to concentrate our energies on material and social advancement of our people. That was the main reason of his organising small scale industries of many types, so that the workers may benefit on co-operative basis. His powers of drive and man-management were of a very high order.

He taught that the only way God can come to a hungry man is in the form of a morsel of bread. He pleaded for materialism in the service of spirituality: material improvement, he held, is the condition precedent for India's spiritual and moral

advancement; one is the means and the other the end, and he found no conflict between them.

With his great personal charm and logic, he appealed almost daily to his audiences that spirituality suffers as much from lack of wealth as from too much of it: and he found the spirituality of Afro-Asian countries suffering from the former and that of the Western countries from the latter.

It is not to religion that he asked the nation to turn, to seek ways and means to work out its material and social welfare, but to science and democracy. Yet, he constantly proclaimed that religion will ever remain the National passion of India; the search for the meaning of life lies beyond the horizon of man's material desires and struggles.

The urge to know the soil, to know God, to pierce the mystery that veils nature constitutes the religious impulse in man. Indian culture bears the deep impress of this impulse in its many manifestations. There need be no fear that material and political advancement may choke up this distinctive national theme; on the contrary, the energy of this theme; according to Sahebji Maharaj, will only find higher and higher expressions in the life of our people, when our old economic and social maladies become progressively cured through the application of science and democracy. He tried throughout his great leadership to promote this tiny industrial revolution in his own sect and succeeded in a short time to raise their material well-being in addition to their moral and spiritual advancement. It is to Sri Sahebji's credit that he enunciated the all-embracing spirituality of Hindus again and again and demonstrated in practical work the end and aim of all life's endeavours and struggles, to consist in freedom, freedom from bondages, actual and possible,

physical, intellectual and spiritual. This all-embracing touch comes out prominently in his definition of his faith. "Each soul is prominently divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature external and internal. Do this and be free.

The conquest of external nature leading to liberation from physical, social and intellectual bondages of the soul is the contribution of science and politics to the growth of the soil. They thus become transformed into forms of spirituality, they become departments of practical Vedanta, art, science and religion which are but three different ways of expressing a single truth.

By his daily talks and Satsangas he thus raised the spiritual, moral and material status of lacs of his followers who gave him selfless love and service and developed implicit faith in him. He constantly advised that every action of ours should be aimed towards our spiritual advancement. If we constantly follow this principle, we shall be conscious that each of our actions takes us towards God.

Without a spiritual direction, the forces generated by science and politics nourish the lower self of man and become sources of sorrow and discord, division and instability. A knowledge which leads us to the increase of sorrow is not knowledge, but ignorance, the offspring of spiritual blindness. It is spiritual awareness alone that transforms all knowledge into real wisdom, and into forms of peace and happiness, love and unity.

BHAGAT SUKHU

While serving in Campbellpur district, in 1916, 1 first heard about Sri Bhagat Sukhu, a great exponent of Bhakti Yoga. He went from village to village to establish a school, where local system of accounting was taught. No notebooks, pencils or pens were ever used. His teaching was practical and all oral.

As soon as a pupil was admitted to the school, the student had to take an oath of loyalty, truthfulness and honesty in all dealings with everyone. Pupils were admitted irrespective of their ages. You had a man of sixty years studying side by side with a boy of eight years. There was only one class and the staff consisted of only one individual, who was Bhagatji himself. Music, both vocal and instrumental, was part of the curriculum. The work of the school started at the early hours of the morning, at 6 a. m., whether it was summer or winter, and closed at 8 p.m. Though this long duration of the class was a bit strange, all appreciated it and the students spent the day together, they worked and played and cooked their own food and had their meals all together. Whatever the pupils were doing formed part of their daily lessons.

Everyone developed himself under his strict discipline.

Bhagatji's orders were implicit and were obeyed with a zoal, seldom noticed elsewhere.

After about three months' study, the students could solve orally all the problems and answer questions in the system of business accounting. It was amazing to notice the speed with which all questions were answered by a pupil as soon as they were asked. I was astonished to see such accurate answers given orally in such a quick time! Further the standard of morals, personal

conduct and character were very high. The students soon became the most pleasant and noble members of the village community and commanded love and respect.

Teaching and prayers, Kirtan and Satsanga talks on spiritual matters and business methods went on side by side. In a day, half the time was spent on religious education and the other half on business accounting, thus providing for both heart and the head. I could never imagine a school of this type and had never come across such a thing anywhere else, where in six months' time a pupil could usefully learn how to earn his living and also morally and spiritually advance by developing intense love for God, preceptor and for the members of the village community.

Sri Bhagatji, though a Grihastha, was leading a very simple and austere life, and went from village to village, carrying his message of love and worship of God as well as a system of regeneration of moral and spiritual well-being of all men, in addition to the novel method of his teaching a profession in the attainment of which any one could run a small business on honest lines. After school hours and after the evening meal a religious Satsanga was held every evening, when all members of the village community gathered and enjoyed soul elevating Kirtans and Bhajans and talks by Bhagatji on social and religious matters.

Bhagat Sukhu was extremely popular and sought after. He carried a long waiting list of villages where the next school could be started and his novel way of teaching introduced. The school fee was very nominal, as Bhagatji's prime motive was to serve the people selflessly, and to the best of his ability, without burdening the poor village folk. He impressed one and all as a real saint in a householder's garb, who had dedicated his mind

body and soul in the service of the simple people without self-advertisement. He never talked of himself. School fees were paid on the day of admission and on the day of the closure of the school, as Gurudakshina. Worship of God and recitation of the Ramayana were also the items in the daily programme, but no books were ever used, everything was done orally. He was great believer in obeying one's preceptor implicitly.

Sri Bhagatji had his own system of Sadhana. I was lucky to have him staying with me for about six months, while he was running a school in Campbellpur district and I started following his system of prayer and meditation from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. daily in which he gave me guidance. A man of very simple habits, and of few words, who worked incessantly for the benefit of the village folk with a feeling that God was with him always, He guided him in all the things he did. Bhagatji was a spiritual giant in his own simple way and was largely responsible for the moral and cultural regeneration of the Hindus in the Campbellpur, Rawalpindi and Jhelum districts. Every village of a moderate size had a common meeting place where Satsanga, Bhajan and Kirtans were held every evening. The forces which he generated moulded the minds of both young and old. He knew the Bhagavad Gita in Punjabee, by heart, and used to recite it daily, and explained in a simple and easily understandable manner many important points in the Gita Slokas (verses). Everyday he spoke also on social equality of the untouchables, most emphatically, and did succeed in having their children admitted into his school, so that they also might become economically independent of the higher castes. Without much academic qualifications and training, he was able to mould his pupils into useful men of the community with

agood moral character, a strong and disciplined mind and a keen intelligence, and also a social awareness of equality.

REVEREND FATHER SMITH (MAJOR)

I had the privilege of my acquaintance with Father Smith in 1917, when the Ist World War was going on. I was drawn to him, in the first instance, when I witnessed him going to every wounded Other Rank or an Officer and holding his hands in prayer and invoking the Lord's grace upon the distressed individual. By his virtuous action they attained peace and tranquillity of mind during the last moments, before the end claimed them. His sympathetic and serviceful attitude to the needy and the suffering was very pleasant and helpful. They were visibly moved by his selflessness and the expressions on the faces of the suffering and the wounded demonstrated the effect of his soothing words at all times. He kept himself busy throughout in ministering to the needs of the patients and never felt upset or showed signs of fatigue on the sudden and intermittent calls at all odd hours, for his last blessings to men, Having lived in the same dug-out or attent with him for many weeks, I studied his unique personality and winning manners in the midst of extreme discomfort and a complete lack of physical comfort to which he was accustomed in life. I eagerly joined in his prayers whenever possible and discussed many matters, particularly religious, philosophical and spiritual. We used to agree about the similarity of important basic principles between Hindus and Christians. He was a man of broad views and sincere, God-fearing and a true Christian. He said that his spiritual thought rests upon the conviction that 'God is life and life is God, and that most assuredly there is no other God but this.' He lived in Him constantly and I always felt that he constantly repeated His Name in fervent prayer. Father Smith's doubts and denials, which were many, were on integral aspect

of his religion as were his beliefs and affirmations. He thought both of them were from God. The first articulate words spoken by God to man, he said, took the form of a question. "Adam, where art thou?" and the answer, if truly given, will be 'I am in God.' Adam means every man, as every one is the son of God. Death has equal dominion over all of us.

My brief acquaintance with him made me see clearly the depth of my own ignorance. This had surely taught me to view the things in life through a better angle of vision, and to realise the fallacy of ego-centric and self-centered life that I had been accustomed to lead then: 'Vanity of vanities,' All is vanity.' I have also learnt, in a way, that most men are in a similar condition, not excepting the experts in science, the many philosophers and saints. While there are many whose ignorance is less than mine, there are many whose ignorance is greater. We are all in the same boat; more or less, making our way across the sea of Samsara (worldly ephemeral existence). If we could get rid of the ego, we could be nearer God, mentally and spiritually. Father Smith felt, however, that for a man to be ignorant is to be in the dark, but to know really in your heart of hearts that you are very ignorant is to be in the light. He used to say, "As we do not see the light but only illuminated objects, so we do not see God but only God-illuminated world and our God-illuminated selves. Without His light we should see nothing and know nothing, nay we should be nothing. For, He is life as well as light, and the one is being the other."

He said, "What are you or I when measured against the awful immensities and eternities of the universe? What is the Pope? What is the orator convincing and swaying the audience standing on the high platform? Mere nothing and equal in being

so. Pride, surely, is the deadliest of sins or at least the silliest of absurdities. And what pride was inflated and silly as that which prompts us to deem ourselves or our race, the summit of creation and the darlings of the Creator. Let us then be of good cheer. In knowing that we are nothing, we become something, and something, believe me, than which the whole universe is not greater."

Father Smith was convinced that in religion, as in morals, truth lies about the mean between two extremes. Like Buddha and Christ, he believed in moderation. Avoid all excesses and extremes'. He often said, 'that power which permeates the universe is God. His existence is dynamic. No one can ever escape Him. Though you take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, the Power that makes for Excellence will be after you, will envelop you in its embrace and press dynamically upon every motion of your mind and body. Were God's power to cease for a moment, you too, would instantly cease to be.'

His faith in God's constant care of us all was unshaken. 'God', he used to say, 'does not need any prayers to induce Him to do good to everyone. He is not waiting to be asked, as not knowing that I need His help until reminded by somebody's prayer. God never withdraws His everlasting arms from anyone. We all live in Him, and move and have our being in Him. We draw the vitality of His air in every breath and it is really His breath of life which keeps us alive. The pressure of His atmosphere and gravitational force keeps us standing and neutralising our body pressure to keep us active and moving about.'

"It is His light in which we are able to see and His sound in which we are able to hear what is audible. In his vitality and

strength we are able to do what is our duty and what is worth doing. God keeps our heart beating from moment to moment and the blood coursing through our veins and arteries. He keeps the earth spinning on its axis and the fire of His Sun constantly burning to sustain all life. "No Sun, no life." "O Lord! Thou needest no prayer of ours to persuade Thee to bless us, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is Thy mercy beyond the striving of our thoughts." This was Father Smith's usual prayer. Advised all to pray early every day and begin it by meditating for a few moments on the majesty and all- encompassing love of God. I must say that I was extremely fortunate in having had the acquaintance of such a noble and evolved soul and in the fullness of my heart I am thankful to the All-Merciful Lord for having had the opportunity and privilege of spending a few weeks in Father Smith's benign company. Peace be to all!

ASKARI DARVESH

While living in the desert about 8 miles from the Pyramids outside Cairo in September, 1939-we used to pass by a venerable old faqir sitting at the foot of the huge Sphinx (the Lion with the face of a man). Weeks passed and it seemed he remained glued to the same spot in severe dust-storms or scorching sun or the cold biting winds in the small hours of the mornings.

I often thought of stopping the staff car and watching this man who has willingly selected a solitary confinement for himself.

As I had no civilian clothes I thought that my military uniform may be repugnant to this recluse and I may draw a blank and waste my time which I could ill afford.

Further, not knowing Arabic-it might be impossible to have a talk although even sitting at the feet of a man of this type may assist me greatly in my spiritual aspirations.

My men represented that they wanted a couple of days off for the Dashara festival (Durga Pooja) and wanted to rehearse a play which they had organised for this auspicious day. Finding a break-1 took my vehicle and drove to this place at about 5 a.m. I found him sitting in a crumpled up posture and disinclined to talk.

The vibrations from him appeared to me to be very soothing, peaceful and pleasant-after about 3 hours stay near him the sun became very hot and I decided to leave him in his solitude.

It surprised me when he made signs with his large hand to stay on and spoke in perfect King's English. I was overjoyed.

He said that if we plant thorns we cannot expect to gather dates. If we spin coarse wool-we cannot weave fine gold brocade from it. Our passions lead to our own destruction. We have no control over our senses which run like uncontrolled horses after the fleeting sense-objects.

Our sins are never pardoned he said. We cannot erase them. We have nothing good to balance against our terrible imperfections. Only God's grace will be our saviour.

How do you know whether the next breath will come or not. Time is short and the road long. God gave us life. It is so precious but it is quickly passing away and will not return and we seem to enjoy wasting it in ungodly and sinful thoughts and actions.

We cannot remember God and follow His commands if we do not mend our ways.

He said that he was glad to see me. This meeting was ordained and he wanted me to visit him again. He had left his hearth, his family and his home as well as a big post which carried a huge salary as he found them all selfish, empty and devoid of Lord's Love. He was in the army too and was promoted to the rank of a senior officer but found lack of God and lack of truth in the reign of falsehood. Therefore people call him Askari Darvesh. He welcomes no visitors and those who know him come occasionally but go away after leaving a few eatables. These he never desires, as God gives him everything. He is perhaps, expecting a grain of grace from the storehouse of the Lord and His saints-as he had not sown anything himself.

In my subsequent visits to this great faquir Askari Darvesh, he impressed upon me his beliefs as follows:

1. He was convinced that all the religions were true that every system represented as path to God,

2. That all spiritual thoughts and practices were but different stages in human progress towards the goal. They are never contradictory but complementary being suited to different mental outlooks. Not realising this underlying harmony, every sect has tried interpretation of basic spiritual thought from its own point of view, to the exclusion of others, with the result that philosophical discussions have become a bugbear and driven some people in despair to atheism or agnosticism. Prophet Mohammed was born, he often said, to remove all misunderstandings by his own example after Self-realisation and renunciation. This realisation cannot be described and reasoned out, for, it is something to be felt, as it transcends mind and speech.

3. For ordinary humanity with strong attachment to senses it is dificult to comprehend the universal religion unless they give up their physical and mental thoughts and enjoyments of the world and its objects.

4. "By doing selfless service and serving humanity one gains love for God, and gradually attains Him through His grace and His favour. It is not difficult for me to talk to God as I am talking to God constantly.

5. The help God gives to us depends on our faith in Him and on the moral strength and awareness we had attained by constant remembrance of Him. He keeps His loving arms always widely open for us to run into them.

6. The saints and sages of all countries and climes who have died in His service, look back on us with blessings so that we

may follow them and their ideas. Now happy in Lord's loving care they see us with full faith in our actions, so that we too may meet Him. May we be lucky enough to sincerely desire and grasp His loving hands so that we also join them in the happiness they now enjoy. God watches over all His servants who rely on Him and sees that they get the true reward for their devotion, which can only be the blessed one Himself. "Death in a noble cause is only an entry to the higher life; so how can lovers of the Lord ever die?" so says the holy Koran.

7. God helps those who seek Him in full devotion and faith. This one-pointedness is really natural to man, for God made him for that, and the laws of nature keep him straight in the path once entered on. "Watch and pray the Koran says but remain alert against every evil thought and act, and pray to God for help and protection; then your perseverance will be crowned with success. We, by ourselves, are always liable to slip into errors of tact and judgement, if not worse, however devoted we may be; but even from those weaknesses God will save us if we always look to Him. We need no other help or mediator, for God Himself is all in all and ever ready to save His faithful servants as soon as they call on Him.

8. God sends His saints and messengers to strengthen and comfort those who love Him and try to do His work. "They bring glad tidings of bliss in store for the faithful souls and of their own protecting friendship around the faithful always in this life and next. A change of heart must, however, come before His eternal blessings can be really felt.

9. It is those who truly believe, putting their whole faith in, clinging to and following their Lord, who receive His blessings. They draw nearer and nearer to Him, granted all their needs

from the infinite stores of His love and mercy and helped by Him in all their difficulties. Though He does not need our help, He is good enough to welcome our cooperation and promises us His own in return. The best return that He can make for us is to guide us into His paths of peace, and to give us love for Him, the highest gift of His grace.

10. So stick to Him alone. "If you love God-then follow me" says Mohammed the Prophet. "God will love you and forgive your faults. There is no compelling in the religion; the right way has now been clearly made distinct from error; and he who rejects the devils and believes in God has grasped the firm handle which never breaks. He who holds fast to God, has indeed already. been guided to a righteous path; He united your hearts, so by His own goodness you became like brothers and He saved you from sin.

11. "All saints in every faith have found that without prayer and silent remembrance of God it is impossible to keep close to Him or to grow in faith and grace.

12. In all religions there are sincere devotees; so Churches, temples, and mosques monasteries of every kind must be carefully guarded from injury by fanatics. God is interested in the safety of all sacred buildings set apart for His worship. Masjid does not only mean "only mosque"--but any place where men of any religion prostrate before the one God. The Shrines belong not to the priests or trustees or any favoured castes but to God, and must always be open to all His worshippers. Those who try to keep others away as unfit, are themselves unfit to enter, save with trembling for their sins and wicked pride.

13. Before God-there are no distinctions of family, wealth, rank or education. Islam is a religion truly democratic; its strength has always been in the brotherly equality it shows to every Muslim whether an English Lord, a proud Arab Chieftain, a humble tailor or a Negro slave. As Muslims they are all equal.

We used to sit in prayers together whenever we happened to be near each other. The prayer was mental as well as by the word of mouth. He always thanked God for the chance given for another breath, another day of life and an opportunity to serve his fellow-men and to improve. A chance to become better than yesterday by getting over our shortcomings.

I once asked him, why his prayer includes the usual standing, sitting and bending down while in prayer. He said, it is to keep fit and alert instead of dozing off while actually praying to the Lord,

He occasionally demonstrated his superhuman powers, though reluctantly, in order to assure me that these powers come automatically in the Lord God's path. These should never be used for conceit or ego or advertisement, but for the good of others or to demonstrate to the unbelievers so that they might change their opinions and take to the path of the Lord with faith.

Some of the powers which he demonstrated at various times and occasions are:

1. A snake was creeping away. He said "stop" and it stopped; he picked him up and kept on his lap, or his neck or round his shoulders and his abdomen. On his bidding again-he creeped away again. He added "In Egypt we seldom or ever attack a snake or kill it and there is seldom any case of a snake-bite.

2. He asked for my hand-kerchief and said that he would create any scent I desired on the hand-kerchief which he exposed to the sun's rays. Rose and Jasamine scents remained on my kerchief for many days afterwards although I saw that he did nothing but expose the cloth to the sun and he had no scents with him.

3. A hen was seen about 2 yards away he looked at it-it came running towards him and lo! it was dead and breathless. I did not like it at all and asked him why should he destroy an innocent life. He smiled and touched the hen again to give its life back to it. In a few minutes it was alive and moving about.

4. He could throw a vibration to me and summon me to him a thought used to arise suddenly with a strong desire to visit him. He smiled on seeing me and said he called me intentionally to show me some method of concentration which will perhaps be easier for me to practise.

5. He sometimes made me shut my eyes and concentrate in the heart-region and lo! beautiful flowers and grass plots appeared under new horizons which I had not known or ever seen before-lovely flowery bridges and temples. On enquiry as to what all that meant-he said, they were various places where I shall go in my next birth and live in renunciation though surrounded by luxurious articles and areas.

6. He said life does not end in this world as Muslims think-but they do not go deeper into their scriptures where it is clear that life goes on always and always till you join the Lord.

With a tall bright and a well-built body he spent all his time in solitude and prayer, but occasionally visited me in the desert whenever I was nearby.

7. He often impressed upon me that we should never take the duties of God unasked for and try to punish our enemies by having wars. God cannot like destruction of His children. He has His own way of punishing the wicked.

8. Who is more wicked; he once asked, than he who makes up a lie about God, and says "I am inspired"--when he has not been inspired at all, or who says "I shall bring down the like of what God has sent down in this world." The sceptics who turn away from the path of God, opposing the messenger after guidance has been made clear to them, cannot hurt God at all, and God will never forgive those who disbelieve and turn away from God's path and then die as unbelievers. The state of mind at the end of life is of great importance for a man's future, but God cannot be cheated, and deathbed repentance is of little or no value, for it leaves no time for him to make amends. Leaving the sentiment aside no one can dedicate himself to God and repent his sinful actions unless he has been doing continuously during his active life. He laughed at the idea of some people that thinking of gratification of senses throughout the life cannot turn your mind to God at the time of death. You can only think of God at the time of death if you have continuously thought of Him during your lifetime

9. He was of a definite opinion that the Koran has many points of similarity with the scriptures of all religions so that those who accept the fact of revelations, and those who know that the prophethood is a real spiritual gift may be led to think seriously about its claims. Many who realise that the Islam is from the same Divine Source as their own religions welcome it with deep emotion and reverence, and gain from it God's own Grace. For every one who turns away from it, many more new

devotees of better energy and devotion will come. God's work will go on for ever and ever.

10. He said, it is written in Koran that "those who have done evil deeds and then afterwards repented and believed and are strong enough not to repeat their offence forgetting their previous sinful habits and thereby making good and doing free service truly the Lord may become merciful and forgiving." God's forgiveness is for all who having done some wrong through their weakness, turn at once to Him in prayer and try never to repeat the offence.

11. "We must aboslutely and at all times be sincere in prayer, if we wish to win God's help to set things right, we must face our errors frankly and be prepared for their punishment in justice and mercy which will further purify us and strengthen our faith in Him." Unintentional mistakes matter little. It is the errors of commission which will never be pardoned; errors of omission are excusable the great wheels of time grind them into powder. Sin is only in the heart; it is the wilful doing of what is known as wrong. Unless the heart is changed and one tries honestly to make amends, it cannot be forgiven. A last minute repentance is of no avail as it is not assisted by any real good deeds and there is no proof of sincerity. God's laws cannot be broken, and a man will harvest only the crop that he has planted.

12. God chooses those of his "holy assembly" of saints whom He knows to be worthy and inspires them with a message for their own people and in their own tongue. He has sent them to all peoples in the world, speaking in the common language of the day and in such a way as to appeal to the men of that particular age. It is only when wickedness prevails, when

sorrow is everywhere, and men's minds are confused, that they are likely to listen to what God's Prophet has brought. The history of Jews, Christians, Mohammedans and Hindus will bear this out.

It would have been useless to give the Arabs the list of the numberless messengers God has sent to all the nations of the world since prehistoric times. So the Koran only names and tells the story of those who were familiar to the people living in Arabia: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and the like.

Ever since the world began, God has spoken to men through His saints and prophets, often revealing through them a sacred book to guide those who accept their message. These prophets, differed in their divine achievements, some being more inspired than others. But all obeyed the Lord perfectly and none said anything save what he had heard from God. Therefore, all those messages and sacred books, as originally given out came from God and God alone and are priceless pages of His Divine and Eternal book. From time to time He changes the regions of men, making some customs to change when they are old and replacing them with others that are new lest one good custom should corrupt the world as Tennyson has said. But as we study the long ages of history and delve into prehistoric myths, superstitions and rites we see a steady evolution in the world's religions. Islam is the last and best of them all as it believes in brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God, selfless service of humanity, charity, with feelings of love and devotion for all mankind, and tolerance of all the sacred and inspired books.

FATHER PAGANI

It was in the year 1922, when I returned to Secunderabad from the service in the army of the Black Sea and Russia, that I had the privilege of meeting Father Pagani. He was a sincere Roman Catholic who believed in the eternal good of all mankind if they would only put their trust entirely on God. He had a gift of healing; to cure the patient that came to him; he sincerely offered prayers in the name of Jesus and if the patient had faith in God, he did get relief of his symptoms and felt better. He used to say that Hindus got more benefit of his prayers of healing than Christians as the former seemed to have a deeper faith in God's omnipotence. Father Pagani often said: 'As a magnifying glass concentrates the rays of the sun into a little burning knob of heat that can set fire to a dry leaf or a piece of cotton, so also the mysteries of Christ in the Gospel concentrate the rays of God's light and fire to a point that sets fire to the spirit of man. And this is why Christ was born and lived in the world and died and returned from death and ascended to his Father in Heaven. Through the prism of His humanity He concentrates the rays of His Holy spirit upon us so that we feel the burn, and all mystical experience is infused into the soul through the Christ.

For God is everywhere, His truth and His love pervade all things as the light and the heat of the sun pervade our atmosphere. But just as the rays of the sun do not set fire to anything by themselves, so God does not touch our souls with the fire of supernatural knowledge and experience without His medium Jesus or other saints. But the spiritually inclined humanity seeks out spirits that are well prepared, dried by

warmth and the light of God and are ready of take flame in the little knot of fire that is the grace of the Holy Ghost.'

Father Pagani believed that the normal way to contemplation is by a belief in Christ that is born of thoughtful consideration of His life and His teachings. But just because all experience of God comes to us through Christ, it does not necessarily mean that every seeker and every contemplative always, invariably, arrives at his contemplation through Christ as He may exist in our imagination. For the imagination is only one of the means for keeping the object of our belief before our minds. We do not always have to force ourselves to picture Christ as we think he must have looked or ought to have looked, for, really, no one can be quite sure just how He looked.

He said, 'Faith in Christ and in the mysteries of His life and His death, is the foundation of Christian life and the source of their contemplation into direct communication with the Lord. For the man-Christ is the word of God, even though His human nature is not His divine nature. The two are united in one person and are one person so that the man-Christ is God. But, it is faith and not imagination that gives us supernatural life, faith that justifies us, faith leads us to contemplation. Imagination only enters into it accidentally. If you need to use your imagination in order to remind yourself of the Christ in whom you believe, go ahead and use it. But if you can exercise your faith in Him without the bother of always conjuring up some picture of Him, so much the better, your faith will be simpler and purer.

'So it would seem to be unnecessarily complicating the interior life to demand that everyone should deliberately keep his imagination occupied with the image of Christ as He is thought to have looked when He lived among men. With this, as well

as with all other means and devices, the rule would seem to be Use what helps you and avoid what gets in your way. In Some people it is quite easy to return within themselves and find a simple picture of Christ or any other saint in their imagination, and this is an easy beginning of prayer. But for others this does not succeed. On the contrary the effort it costs may fill their heads with problems and disturbances that make prayer impossible. Yet, at the same time, the mere name of Jesus or the indistinct, unanalysed notion of Christ or the Master of their choice is enough to keep their faith fully occupied in a simple awareness of Him, who is really present constantly in our souls by His Divinity.

"In arriving at contact with God without the medium of sensible images they are travelling by a shorter and simpler way than those who have to mobilise their interior senses when they want to pray, and if they involved themselves in multiple acts and devices", they would only weaken the intensity of their simple faith. Everyone of us forms an idea of Christ that is limited and incomplete. It is cut according to our own measure. We intend to make a Christ in our own image, a projection of our own aspirations, desires and ideals. With our ego ruling supreme, we find in Him what we want to find. We make him not only the incarnation of God but also the incarnation of the things we and our society and a part of it what we happen to live for. Therefore, although it is true that perfection consists in imitating Christ and reproducing Him in our own lives, it will not take us very far on the way to perfection merely to imitate the Christ that we have in our imaginations.

"The problems of forming the Lord in us is not to be solved by our own efforts, but always under the guidance of grace, in

complete subjugation to the Lord's grace. For, if we depend upon our own ideas, our judgments and our efforts, it will be stiff, artificial or inert, It is the spirit of God that must teach us and transform into other Christs. For, after all, transformation into Christ is not just an individual affair."

About the holy Ghost, Father Pagani said: "The holy Ghost, who is the life of this one body dwells as entire in the whole body and in every one of the members so that the whole Christ is Christ and each individual is Christ. Therefore, if you want to have in your heart the affections and dispositions that were those of Christ on earth, consult not your own imagination but 'Faith'. Enter into the darkness of interior renunciation, strip your soul of image and let Christ form Himself in you by His Cross.

'Exterior things come and go, but why should they touch me? Why should joy excite me or sorrow cast me down, pleasure please me or pain disturb me, life attract or death repel me, if I have to live only in the life that is within me by God's gift? Why should I worry about losing a bodily life that I must inevitably lose any way, as long as I possess a spiritual life and identity that cannot be lost against my desires? Why should I fear to cease to be what I am not when I have already become something of what I am? Why should I go to great labour to possess satisfactions that cannot last an hour and which bring misery after them, when I already own God in His eternity of joy? It is the easiest thing in the world to possess this life and this joy; all you have to do is to believe and love: and yet people waste their whole lives in appalling labour and sacrifice to get things that make real life impossible. This is one of the chief contradictions that sin has brought into souls, because for us the

line of least resistance leads in the way of greater hardship and sometimes for us to do what is, in itself most easy, can be the hardest thing in the world.'

Father Pagani was, in my humble opinion, a rare manifestation of the Catholic faith. He often told me that souls are like wax waiting for a seal. By themselves they have no special identity. Their identity is to be softened and prepared in this life, by God's will, to receive at their death the seal of their own degree of likeness to God. The wax that has melted in God's will can easily receive the stamp of its identity, the truth of what it was meant to be. But the wax that is hard and dry and brittle and without love will not take the seal; for, the seal falling upon it, grinds it to powder. Therefore, if you spend your life trying to escape from the heat of the fire that is meant to soften and prepare you to become your true self, and if you try to keep your substance from melting in the fire, as if your true identity were to be hard wax the seal will fall upon you at last and crush you. You will not be able to take your own true name and you will be destroyed even by the same that was meant to be your fulfilment.

Father Pagani said: A sincere and spiritual type of priest of a meditative mind will always feel that his Mass will be going on within him not only when he is at the alter but also when he is away from it, and at different moments during the day when he is otherwise tense. Thus a continual Mass, a deep and urgent sense of identification with an act of incomprehensible scope and magnitude that somehow has its focus in the centre of your soul, pursues you wherever you go and in all situations of your daily life. It makes upon you secret and insistent demands for agreement and consent. This truth is so tremendous that it

cannot be expressed. It is entirely personal. And you have no special desire to tell anybody about it. Not even distracting duties and other things will be able to interfere with it altogether. You keep finding this anonymous accomplice burning within you like a deep and peaceful fire. Perhaps you will not be able to completely identify yourself with this divine presence and this continuous action going on within you.

'It is a tremendous grace, then, and a great privilege when a person living in the world one has to live in, suddenly loses his interest in the worldly things that absorb and discovers in his own soul an appetite for solitude and poverty. And the most precious of all the gifts of nature or grace is the desire to be hidden and to vanish from the sight of man and be accounted for as nothing by the world and to disappear from one's own self-conscious consideration and vanish into nothingness in the immense poverty that is the adoration of God. This absolute emptiness, this poverty holds within it the secret of all joy because it is full of God. To seek this emptiness is true devotion to God. To find it is to find Him. And to be hidden in its depths is to be full of God, as Christ is full of Him, and to share his mission of bringing Him to all mankind.

'A man who is killed by one enemy is just as dead as one who has been killed by a whole army. If you are friends with one habit of mortal sin you live in death, even though you may seem to have all virtues. Some people think that it is enough to have one virtue, like kindness or broad-mindedness or charitable disposition, and let everything else goby. But if you are unselfish in one way and selfish in twenty-five other ways, your virtue will not do you any good. In fact, it will probably turn out to be nothing more than a twenty-sixth variety of the same

selfishness, disguised as virtue. Therefore, do not think that because you seem to have some good quality, all the evil in you can be excused or forgotten on that account alone.

'Do not think that you can show your love for the Lord by hating
those who seem to be His enemies on earth. Suppose they really do hate Him, nevertheless He loves them and you cannot be united with Him unless you love them too."

Father Pagani's sermons often included the following:

1. If you hate the enemies of the Church instead of loving them, you will run the risk of becoming an enemy of the Church and of the Christ; for He said, 'Love your enemies', 'He that is not with me is against me.' Therefore, if you do not place yourself with Chirst by loving those that He loves, you are against Him.

2. But Christ loves all men. Christ died for all men. And Christ said that there was no greater love than that a man should lay down his life for his friend.

3. Do not be too quick to assume that your enemy is a savage just because he is your enemy. Perhaps he is your enemy because he thinks you are a savage; or perhaps is afraid of you because he feels you are afraid of him. And perhaps if he knew you were capable of loving him he would no longer be your enemy.

4. Do not be too quick to assume that your enemy is an enemy of God because he is your enemy. Perhaps he is your enemy precisely because he can find nothing in you that gives glory to God. Perhaps he fears you because he can find nothing in you of God's kindness and God's patience and mercy and understanding of the weakness of man.

5. Do not be too quick to condemn the man who no longer believes in God: for it is perhaps your coldness and avarice, mediocrity and materialism, sensuality and selfishness that have killed his faith.

6. A man cannot be a perfect Christian, i.e., a saint, unless he is also a socialist in its right sense. This means that he must either absolutely give up all rights to possess anything at all, or else only use what he himself needs, of the goods that belong to him, and administer the rest for other men and for the poor, and in his determination of what he needs he must be governed to a great extent by the gravity of the needs of others.

7. But you will say it is practically impossible for a rich man to put into practice this clear teaching of the scriptures and the Catholic religion and tradition. You are right and there is nothing new in that. Christ told everybody the same thing long ago when he said it was easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

8. If Christians had lived up to the Church's teaching about property and poverty, there would never have been an occasion for wars.

9. If you have any money, consider that perhaps the only reason God allowed it to fall into your hands was in order that you might find joy and perfection by throwing it away.

10. It is easy enough to tell the poor to accept their poverty as God's will, when you yourself have warm clothes and plenty of food and medical care and a roof over your head. But if you want them to believe you, you should try to share some of their poverty and see if you can accept it as God's will yourself.

DR. RAJAB ALI PATEL

A famous and popular medical practitioner of Bombay, I met him in Mussorie in 1930. His life was an open book for any one to read. He was up at 4 a.m. daily and heard divine songs while he was spinning. His usual habit was to spin 400-500 yards of cotton thread daily, when everyone was asleep in the quiet of the morning. He was 75 then. It was said that you could correct your watch by his punctuality.

The clothes he wore, were woven out of his own hand-spun yarn.

He was a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi and in spite of his life of luxury he was simple and humble in his private life.

He was the head of the Congress hospitals which he administered with distinction and selfless devotion to duty. His powers of drive were well known to Gandhi who knew whom to give a difficult job of work to do.

Although a devout Mohammedan who regularly performed 5 prayers a day as enjoined in his religion; he repeated, "Om Namo Narayanaya" while spinning every morning and his wife read the "Sukhmani Saheb" at the same time.

When Gandhi was on his famous Dandi march for making salt, he sent for Rajab Ali. When Rajab Ali arrived-the Bapu expressed disappointment at the shortage of funds in the Congress hospitals of which he was the head.

Rajab Ali explained the reasons of the heavy expenditure on equipment and buildings. Gandhi requested him to donate a lac of rupees from his pocket. Rajab Ali remonstrated and said that as he had no cash he can only produce the necessary amount by

mortgaging one of his buildings in Bombay. Gandhi accepted the suggestion and requested him to go immediately and bring the money back.

Rajab Ali went to Bombay without hesitation and brought the necessary amount without any loss of time. The cheque for rupees one lac which he gave to Bapuji was returned back to Rajab Ali with instructions to buy the medical equipment urgently needed for the congress hospitals. He further apologised to Rajab Ali for this sudden request as he was to be sent to jail in a day or two. Rajab Ali told me that whenever he gave any money to Gandhi it was soon earned by him without much inconvenience.

Dr. Rajab Ali gave an impression by being an honest and truthful personality and everyone who came in contact with him developed a strange affinity towards him.

His daily routine was regularly carried out. Fixed hours for prayer and his professional duties-he seldom forgot to assist his associates in welfare and social uplift of the people living in slums.

It appears that he first met Gandhi in 1918-19 when he went to hear one of his lectures regarding the oppression of people after the Rowlett Act was passed. Gandhi said that he wanted workers, workers who should be selfless and devoted, workers who can give their all for the cause; workers who will lay down their lives if needed; workers like you-pointing out to Dr. Patel whom he did not know and never met before. Beautifully dressed in European clothes Dr. Patel stood up-bent his head in salute and acceptance of any roll Gandhi will give him to work in. This was the beginning of a sincere friendship with him and

the life of dedication he led ever since from 1918-1938 when he died.

Many a time whenever I went to Bombay I stayed with him and accompanied him in his professional work-just to see and learn how a saintly medical man should act and behave during his work.

It was very pleasant to see him talking in a kindly and sympathetic manner to patients.

I have always felt that if a doctor is kind and sympathetic and has pleasant beside manners-half the disease disappears and the patient becomes quiet and peaceful giving a chance to the doctor to understand more regarding his complaints than otherwise.

Once talking of what one should eat and what not to eat-he made a most wonderful statement which I tried to follow. He said, "Brother, it does not make any difference to others what a man eats, as the good and wholesome food or otherwise affects him and him alone, but one should be very careful what one brings out of one's lips. As the wounds of tongue never heal one must always think twice before uttering words which might hurt any one and leave a mental sore which never heals." He further said that careless talks make more enemies than anything else.

It was a pleasure to spend a week-end with his family at his house at Warden Road Bombay.

The whole family woke up at 4 a.m. daily. After a bath they sat down to a common prayer and meditation and then got busy in spinning the fixed number of yards of the cotton thread. All household linen is proudly made out of this yarn which gives a

lot of peace of mind in addition to the spirit of selflessness and dedication to the family.

Once I had organised a party in a Western Cafe in Mussoorie in 1930 and invited his family. Their eldest daughter came and told me that she will boycott the party and lie down at the door in order to prevent all guests British, foreigners or Indians from entering the Cafe. Needless to say the party was cancelled in the Cafe but held at our own house where Kirtan and religious songs welcomed the guests and things served in the Indian fashion. This patriotic gesture was appreciated by all the guests as religion and patriotism cannot be separated.

RAMANA MAHARSHI

In 1934-35 my friend and brother Colonel Sukchain Chopra (Now Swami Sevadas) came on leave from Malaya and brought a copy of the book "A Search in Secret India" by Paul Brunton to me at Abbottabad in the N.W.F.P. He deligently and regularly read most of the book to us in his usual emotional manner full of sincerity and fervour. He had already visited the Maharshi and enjoyed his divine presence. He seemed to have been completely changed in his manners and habits which were already very noble and saintly. It seemed that Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi had quietly but surely taken him into his fold for ever and ever.

Ever since he left India Sukchain used to return to us from Singapore every three years or so and impressed on us the urgent necessity of everyone to realise the Lord. The time is short he used to say, and the journey towards God is long and difficult. There is no time to waste. Let us, therefore, start on the road to him in right earnest here and now.

Mainly through his persuasion I took two months leave and accompanied him to the Maharshi. Many things happened on this sacred pilgrimage towards his lotus feet.

We arrived at Tiruvannamalai Railway station after midnight. Sukhchain goes out and hires a cart drawn by a bullock for our short journey to the Ramanashram. The luggage is put inside and we both sit on the back platform dangling our legs. As soon as the Ashram is reached we are overjoyed. My sense of expectation rises high and lo! a tall Swami comes out in the middle of the night with a pleasant smile of welcome. After a minute's introduction, he says, "The Bhagavan has not yet gone

to sleep. He told me in the evening that two devotees from Punjab are arriving-have chilli-free dinner ready for them. They will be tired and hungry after a long journey." I am dumbfounded. How did the Maharshi know? and why? He further offered to send our luggage to the hut already allotted to us and that we need not lose further time in going straight to the Maharshi and have his Darshan.

We went straight to the Satsanga hall-which was empty the Maharshi sitting on the couch-all naked except a langoti in a very calm, cool and quiet state. We prostrated and sat down without any sign of acknowledgement of our devotion to him.

We were engulfed, as it were, by an atmosphere of complete peace and concentration. Never in my life--I had felt completely at ease-suffering from bubbling joy and divine peace. In his divine presence all questions were forgotten and it seemed that I desired nothing but a permanent seat at his lotus feet doing nothing except living there with my eyes shut as I appeared to have been over powered entirely by his great and attractive personality as well as by his magnificent magnetic eyes which gazed at insignificant me with a kindly look-giving a sure belief that all will be well for my good in his godly presence. We had forgotten the world in those heavenly moments. A disciple quietly came and disturbed my line of thought saying in my ears "Go and have your dinner, it is very late already." The spell was broken-we left unwillingly his divine presence.

A thought came suddenly that the Maharshi appeared to be a Greek marble statue, beautifully chiselled out in perfect form. suddenly come to life. So, it is possible for a man to be so calm, cool and collected in Samadhi all the time.

Next day, we met Paul Brunton living in the hut next to us While talking on various subjects regarding spiritual topics and the attainments of the Maharshi he said that the Bhagavan answers all questions mentally as soon as they arise in the minds of the devotees. He further said that it is never necessary to have a separate meeting with him as you get full satisfaction by sitting quietly in his divine presence.

He added that the Bhagavan is up at 2 a. m. daily, when everyone is fast asleep, in order to clean, cut and prepare the vegetables for cooking the next day. All the fresh vegetables are put there in the evening before. He personally cleans, cuts and washes them. As soon as the needed amount is ready--he leaves the room. It is only he and he alone who decides on the quantity required for cooking next day as he actually knows mentally about the number of visitors expected day after day. How did he know? was the question. He further said that anyone who wishes to sit with him alone should go there at 2 a.m.

All three of us decided to get up and be with the Maharshi at 2 a.m. the next day.

As soon as it was 2 a. m. and we three were sleeping near each other, the Bhagavan came to my bed and said, "Get up, it is 2 a.m. now, you wanted to come to me." How did he know? I suddenly got up and stood anxiously watching the Maharshi walking back silently towards his Satsanga hall. He opened the bamboo gate 50 yards away and went out.

We eased ourselves, and drank a little water taking 4 or 5 minutes and then walked to the hall. The disciple on duty said, "The Bhagavan has not got up as yet this morning." Having

seen him moving out 5 minutes before near our huts was a wonderfully strange and a rare miracle. We talked of it to every one we met and were told that the Bhagavan has always a miracle for every visitor in order to make his faith in the Lord stronger than before.

We stayed there for 13 days and we understood him more and more. It seemed, that he never wears any clothes-when going out for toilet to his beloved Arunachala hill a few times a day he wears a small loin cloth-otherwise he remains naked all the time summer or winter.

He has his meals with all the visitors in the dining hall at regular hours. Actually he takes only a tiny bit of Prasad out of it because an old woman devotee brings food for him daily early in the morning. This lady devotee started doing this ever-since she met the boy saint and followed him with cooked food once a day wherever he was for almost half a century. When one met this old lady once was impressed with her spiritual status and personality. We heard her stirring stories of following the young Maharshi with little bits of food for him from one cave to another and from one temple to another all those years.

We went on a pilgrimage all over the Arunachala hill and the temples in Tiruvannamalai and saw actually the depressions in the stone wall and the floor wherever the Maharshi had sat in Samadhi from day to day, month to month and year to year. When he first arrived there at the age of 17, he threw away into a tank the little change he had and sat in deep meditation constantly. There are huge underground cells, well protected, where the temple authorities keep the silver temple trinkets, thrones, and carts used for the deity every six months for carrying him in a procession round the town. After the

festivities are closed they store all this equipment and lock up the heavy steel doors not knowing on one occasion that the boy saint was sitting inside in one of the corners of the area.

It is said that he remained there for many weeks-the ants had made home on his body and he did not know. Some one spotted his frail body when some lights were taken in to see the articles needing urgent repairs. They removed the body in deep Samadhi. They cleaned him up and rubbed him with oil and asked questions--which he never answered. The whole population of the place turned out day after day to see this wonderful young Sadhu who had realised his object at such a young age. The people who actually saw him are still alive to testify to this wonderful incident of the Maharshi. The whole town worshipped him as well as the people from distant lands, towns and villages.

A stream of visitors started to go to him for blessings. He seldom spoke to any one and just moved away to the jungle to get his usual solitude and peace.

He talks to birds and animals in their own language. He is one with the nature. The cow "Lakshmi" always comes into the hall in the morning to touch his feet with her mouth and he returns her call daily and goes to the cow shed to bless her.

Once an American couple lost their way in the hill and it was getting dark. They saw the Maharshi walking about 20 yards in front of them with a torch. They followed the torch and the Maharshi to the Satsanga hall and it was quite dark. The light of the torch disappeared in the feet of the Bhagavan. The lady saw this and kissed the feet and asked, "How did you come up the hill to rescue us and how great you are. You are still sitting

here and the light of the torch has disappeared in your feet. You are God. The Maharshi smiled and uttered nothing.

On another occasion an English lady devotee had high fever and was lying in the Ashram in the hospital hut. It was after midnight that the Maharshi enquired if the lady had gone away. When the disciples did not reply-he ordered that a bullock cart be now hired and the lady taken out to her room in the travellers bungalow in spite of the heavy rain. This was done under protest from her. As soon as the men returned--he scolded them and said that if they once permitted a lady to stay in the Ashram for a night no one will be able to stop other sincere lady devotees from spending their nights here.

As no women are permitted to stay at night in the Ashram no exception was possible.

Next day the lady returned fit and happy and after prostrations said, "you are wonderful as soon as I reached my rooms I felt absolutely fit and recovered instantaneously. Thanks for sending me away in spite of my protests and abuses".

The greatest personal experience everyone felt on arrival at the presence of the Maharshi was the extreme state of peace and joy one felt. One forgot the world and its entaglements while sitting there as one's concentration was complete.

Another saintly personality we met at Ramanashram was Major Chadwick of the Royal Engineers.

We found him sitting in meditation all day in the Satsanga Hall with a leather belt to support his back and knees. He seldom spoke to any one while there-but in evenings we talked to him as he was living quite near us.

He was working as a garrison Engineer at Bangalore-his nephew was an ADC to the Governor of Madras. The Governor visited the Maharshi and was very impressed by his superhuman personality. The nephew wrote to Chadwick all about his visit to the Ashram. On reading it, Chadwick took a short leave to visit the Ashram. On meeting the Maharshi he decided to remain there permanently and never left him till he died a little while ago. He kept on living there even after the Maharshi dropped his mortal remains.

The senior-most disciple of the Bhagavan was Yogi Ramayya he kept his vow of silence for many years. One day when Paul Brunton opened the door of his hut he found a huge cobra with its raised hood on the floor. In a great excitement he rushed out to get hold of a long stick to kill the cobra-when he met Yogi Ramayya. As he was very much excited the Yogi asked him the cause of his disturbed mind--when he was told that a large cobra was inside the hut the Yogi walked quite calmly in front of Paul Brunton went inside the hut, looked peacefully at the snake and passed his hands over his body as if blessing it. The snake quietly crept away and disappeared.

Paul Brunton was amazed at such a superhuman action and enquired "How did you do that." The Yogi never uttered a word and went away. After a few days, Paul Brunton gave a pencil and paper to the Yogi begging him to write down how he dealt with the snake in such a dangerous situation? The Yogi wrote "I have nothing but love and affection for all the creation and they have nothing but love and affection for me."

It was a wonderful luck for such an undeserving man like myself to sit at the presence of the Bhagawan and forget the world day after day, when there was nothing else to do.

In 1937 we went to Singapore to visit our saintly friend Sukhchain Chopra on our annual leave. He had a beautiful residential bungalow, where we were staying. We found that the whole house was for his guests as he himself lived in a small room on one side of it, its floor was partly covered with mats, the walls had pictures of saints. He used this room for meditation, prayer, living and sleeping. He was very popular with the boys of all nationalities studying in the Govt. English School of which he was a senior teacher. He dressed in the European style when he was on duty; otherwise he only had a loin cloth and a shawl. It is reported by his bearer that he never takes a cooked meal; but has boiling water in a large Thermos flask and milk powder in his room, using it whenever he felt hungry. This life of continuous Sadhana and solitude on little or no food was continued by him for many years. Looking at him one would consider him to be a rare type of a saintly and popular teachers while actually he was a realised soul, busy in his regular Sadhana continuously, except when he was in his school or whenever his popular selfless service was needed by any sick or sorry person or persons in that town. Known all over for his nobility of character and his devotion to free service, he was sought for by people of all nationalities who needed him.

After spending a few weeks in his divine company we returned to India via Ceylon so that Lila might meet the Maharshi on the boat crossing over to India, we met an old English solicitor who was in his "Eighties" and was visiting the Maharshi. The police was asking him all sorts of annoying questions when I overheard him. I went to his rescue and helped him to clear up the matter. Tears rolled down his cheeks whenever I mentioned anything about the Maharshi. He said, he had only one desire

in the world left to be fulfilled and that was a meeting with the Maharshi, whom he thought to be a perfect human being in the world, who had attained the goal of life.

The three or four days, Lila and I spent in the divine company of the Maharshi will ever remain memorable. Whenever Bhagawan wished to help anyone specially, he looked at him for a while and lo! it seemed he found all about his private life in that split second and gave his blessings.

In 1942-43 we were learning jungle warfare in the Tiruvannamalai area, living under trying conditions in the countryside, where we had built our own huts, dugouts or shelters and we were practising mock battles with another formation. Sometimes we were 5 miles, sometimes ten and sometimes up to 100 miles away from the Ashram. General Taffy Davis had given me special permission to visit the Maharshi after dinner every night irrespective of the distance from our temporary camp of his Ashram. This went on for six months or so before we went to Burma to fight the Japanese.

I was with Bhagawan sometimes at 10 p.m. and perhaps at 2 a. m. or at any time between these hours. I always found Bhagawan sitting on his now famous couch, which was his seat night and day. Whether he slept or not I do not know; but he was in constant Samadhi day and night. He taught without speaking, but had mental possession of one and all who came in contact with him. What he imparted is beyond description; but he thought that everyone must reach the goal of life sooner or later.

When some one questioned him about the future events he told them not to try and find out about the future events when they

did not even know themselves. The first duty of each and everyone should be to enquire about one's own self. Unless you know yourself, why waste time in trying to know about others. Religion, he thought was neither a word nor a doctrine. It is the Self-realisation. It is not hearing and accepting. It is being and becoming. It begins with the faculty of realisation and ends in unity with God.

Sitting day after day at the feet of the Maharshi one felt a tingling sensation at the toes whenever he gazed at you and this sensation travelled up the legs to the backbone, one felt as if something was climbing up the nervous paths to the brain, one felt happy contented and, at peace with the world. Nothing else mattered. It is difficult, rather impossible, to describe the few thoughts which arose in one's mind when in his divine presence. One forgot all relations in the world and its objects and one desired one thing and one thing alone i.e. to remain there sitting in his hall without stop, no meals were actually needed as whatever the continuous stream of visitors brought, was immediately distributed without a thought for the next moment. No one even spoke as everyone continuously heard the silent sermon which the Maharshi gave by his presence only.

The teaching of the Maharshi has been beautifully translated by Chadwick, I append in the following few lines from the Pancharatnam as interpreted by him with the approval of the Bhagawan himself:

"Within the heart's cave Brahman ever shines.

There, all alone is 'I' the self-aware

Then enter deep in the heart by search for Self Or diving deep by meditation's means

Or stilling mind by use of breath-control.

Thus may'st thou find sure rest within the Self."

1. "Thou, full of Grace, O ocean of Nectar, the whole physical universe is swallowed up in thy light. O Arunachala, the supreme, be thou the sun for the blissful blossoming of the lotus of my heart.

2. "In thee, O Arunachala, the universe having been formed and having existed is resolved like a picture. This apparent enigma is the most sublime of truths. Thou art the inner Self dancing as "I" in the heart, hence, Lord, Heart is Thy name.

3. "With clear mind turned in on thyself, seeking wherefrom this consciousness of 'I' arises, one realises the self and finds rest in Thee, O Arunachala, as a river is absorbed in the sea."

4. "Abandoning all external objects, with mind and breath perfectly controlled, inwardly meditating on Thee, the Yogi sees Thy light, O Arunachala, and there finds his delight! Such is Thy glory."

5. "With mind consecrated to Thee seeing Thee and realising the whole Universe to be Thyself, he who worships Thee, loving Thee as no other than the Self; conquers, O. Arunachala, being immersed for ever in Thy Bliss."

The Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi was certain that in the recess of the lotus-shaped hearts of all, beginning with Vishnu, the Paramatman shines as pure intellect which is the same as Arunachala or Ramana. When the mind melts in love for Him, and the devotee attains the inmost recess of the heart, where He

ever dwells, the subtle eye of the pure intellect will open and He will be revealed as pure consciousness itself.

Such was the clear lead which the Maharshi gave to his devotees silently and forcibly without any manner of doubt or hesitation, as he had the practical realisation of what he preached.

"Thou who art the meaning of AUM unsurpassed who can understand Thee?

"Thou who art the universal mother, must grant me Thy grace and so save me, Thy Child."

As Thou art the sight of my eyes I beseech thee to find out even without eyes. Otherwise, who can ever hope to discover Thee?

Like the magnet which attracts iron, magnetising it and holding it fast. so do thou with me also.

O Thou ocean of love, in the form of a Hill, have mercy upon me, I beseech Thee.

O Fiery gem. which shines upon all, do Thou burn away my dross!

O Arunachala! Who in the form of my Guru makes me faultless and worthy, pray keep me in Thy care.

"Save me from the enticing snares of the flesh honouring me with union with Thyself!

"Though I plead Thou art deaf, not condescending to listen. I pray Thee. Be not afraid."

"Thou who art ever without anger, what is my crime that I am specially chosen as the object of Thy wrath?

"Wonderful mountain of love, glorified by Gautama, control me by Thy gracious glance!

"Thou radiant sun, blazing transcendentally over all, make to blossom the lotus of my heart."

"Sweet fruit, cupped in my hands, may I ever be drunk with thy juice.

"Look within, gaze steadily on the Self with the inner eye, then will you find it."

"Though my search was but feeble, by the help of Thy grace-I reached the Self."

Such is the teaching of the Maharshi in a nutshell.

THE SAINT WHO NEVER SPEAKS

When my friend Sri Sukchain and I went to Sri Ramana Ashram in 1935-36, we returned to Madras to find out if we could also meet any other great saint in and around that place, as our minds were set in meeting as many saints as we possibly could. We made diligent enquiries regarding the existence of any outstanding personalities of the kind to whom we may be attracted. We heard of a great Yogi living about half-a-mile outside the city, who very much discouraged visitors from meeting him and as such only very few people knew the saint. Naturally our curiosity increased and we went to the coconut grove as directed, and found a clean and newly built hut with a large clock over a small tower in the centre of the roof. The hut, solid and well built, had a four-sided verandah and hidden to view behind tall bamboo fencing all around. The fencing had a tiny bamboo door securely and strongly tied and bolted with a couple of heavy padlocks, this was rather disapponting to us. But we managed to look inside the fencing and saw an individual, well built, devoid of any clothes, sitting cross-legged entirely absorbed in deep trance (Samadhi). We tried to rattle the gate and shouted our request to meet him and have a brief talk with him, if possible. Our noise and shouts had no impression on him and he seemed to be completely merged in deep thought, oblivious to all the din and noise outside. Inside the compound complete silence prevailed. Eventually we met a young man who keeps the keys of the cottage. The man was a hired servant employed by one of the rich devotees of the Yogi. We told him of our desire to meet the Sadhu, but only received a blank refusal to comply. He declared in strong terms: "The sage does not meet such inquisitive noisy parkers like you. He

lives in strict seclusion and you are not to bother him.' He added that the sage spent his days in deep trances and would be very offended if all and sundry were permitted to break in on his privacy. We begged the servant to make an exception in our favour and after much cajolery the man condescended to let us in. He brought out his bunch of keys, unlocked the massive padlocks and opened the bamboo gate, We were told that the sage's kit is practically nothing and it did not include even the keys of the locks. He was locked inside the compound from the outside and had no means of access until the servant visited the place once or twice in a day. The sage sat in Samadhi throughout the day, but in the evenings took some things for his sustenance by way of fruit, a little of sweets and a cup of milk. However, we came to know, there had been many days when the food had remained untouched. He generally came out for a walk in the grove after dusk. We did not understand the reason for all these precautions of locking the sage, when there was practically nothing of value inside to be stolen. The servant told us the circumstances under which the sage was locked in.

Some years ago the saint lived in a cottage without the protection of any door or lock or the fencing, and so the access to his cottage was quite open and free. But one day, we were told, there came a man who was drunk and taking advantage of the defenseless condition of the sage in meditation, entered the cottage and began to belabour him by pulling his beard and shouting abuses. The noise of the assault drew the attention of some young men playing in the nearby field. They entered the cottage and rescued the sage from his assailant, while one of them ran off to the nearby houses to inform people of the incident. Before long a large number of excited people

collected at the cottage and began to manhandle the drunken man who had dared to attack the holy man. We were told that throughout this episode the Sadhu had maintained his usual stoic calmness and endurance. The sage, when he saw and understood that people were about to beat the man, intervened and wrote down the following message: 'If you beat this man, it is the same as beating me; please let him go, for I have forgiven him'. As the sage's words were always respected, the request was reluctantly. obeyed and the drunkard was set free unscathed.

We reverently entered the one-roomed cottage, which was lofty, high-roofed and kept scrupulously clean. A raised marble dais which was about a foot high was built at the centre of the floor, and upon a carpet on the dais sat the sage in deep trance. The servant warned us to be perfectly quiet, because the holy man was in deep meditation. We silently watched him. He was of fine features with darkish skin and was sitting erect in Padmasana (Yogic posture) with a serene face. The Sadhu's head, neck and back formed a perfect straight line, his long thick strand of hair fell on his shoulders. He had his hands clasped over his knees. I noticed that the trunk was remarkably well developed; it was very muscular and in a healthy condition and he wore no clothes.

It seemed to us that he was a man who had conquered the weaknesses of the flesh and mind, and had also controlled his senses. He seemed to smile in triumph over life and its shortcomings, its worries, its hopes and failures. His eyes were wide open, they stared straight ahead in a fixed gaze. The man sat like a carved rock and never moved, and was quite unaware of his surroundings. We watched him intently but could find no

room for doubt that he was in deep meditation. What impressed me most was that throughout this time he never winked his eyes. Surely we had never met anyone who could sit down and look ahead with unabated eyes for two hours or more. We were compelled to conclude that although the man's eyes were still open, they were nevertheless quite unseeing. If his mind was awake, it was not to this world. The body functions and faculties seemed to have gone to sleep. Occasionally a teardrop fell from his eyes. It was clear that the fixation of the eyelids prevented them from carrying out their function on behalf of the tear ducts. A green lizard descended from the roof, crawled over one of the Sadhu's legs and then passed behind the marble dais. Yet, had it crawled over a stone wall, the creature would not have found it a steadier surface than that leg. From time to time flies settled upon his face and journeyed over his skin, but no muscular response could be observed. Had they alighted upon the face of a bronze statue precisely the same effect might have been observed. His breathing was extremely gentle, almost imperceptible, quite inaudible but quite regular. It was the only sign he provided that life had not parted from his body.

We were prepared to stay all day long to have an interview with this wonderful man, but the servant after time came and whispered into our ears that it was useless to wait any longer. We had carried a notebook and a pencil for the sage to write replies to our questions and we decided to wait much against the attendant's wish. After about three hours' anxious vigil, we perceived the first signs of returning activity in the sage's body. The eyelids moved, the eye-balls rolled alarmingly upwards until the whites glared and then came down to normal. The breathing became deeper and more audible. A slight swaying

movement became perceptible in his body. A few minutes later the expression in his eyes changed in such a way that he had become aware of his physical environment. He looked attentively at both of us and smiled.

I seized that opportunity and placed the pencil and the writing pad at his feet. The saint hesitated for a while, then took up the pencil and wrote in bold flourishing Tamil characters: 'I am very happy to meet you and will be pleased to try to answer your questions, if any. You have been waiting for long.' The few questions we put to the sage, and his answers given are appended below.

Question: How have you controlled the pairs of opposites? You do not seem to feel heat or cold, and why have you no clothes at all?

Answer: It is nothing but a force of habit. It does not by itself mean any spiritual progress.

Q: How can we also learn to get over the worldly problems and start on the spiritual path?

A: The saint smiled a little and wrote: since you do not understand even yourself, how can you hope to understand the world and its problems. Why go about from place to place instead of looking within yourself in all sincerity? Why search for the drops of honey of true knowledge while a store of pure honey awaits within you? Knock and you will find.

Q: How are we to look within?

A: Sit in one place, at a fixed time daily, in a fixed and comfortable posture and seek your own Self. You shall then know that Truth is hidden therein.

Q: But I find only ignorance and blank. A: The ignorance exists within your own thoughts directed by
your sense-organs and the mind. You yourself have made yourself ignorant by wrong thoughts. Now start thinking yourself back into wisdom and self-understanding. Worldly thoughts are like a bullock cart carrying you into darkness, but guide them and turn backwards and you will go into light again. The backward turning of thought is the highest Yoga. Do you understand now?

Q: Can we easily learn to go into Samadhi as you do, Sir? A: Yes; be sincere and stay here, and it will not be difficult. Q: Will you please go into Samadhi again?

A: No. I cannot by my own attempts. When a baby is feeding on the mother's milk, does he know when he is going to doze off? Similarly when I am deeply absorbed sitting in the lap of the Lord, I do not know when I go into a deep trance.

With this we left the sage with all reverence and with a feeling of satisfaction of having been fortunate enough to have met a noble and highly elevated personality. I visited the sage's cottage again after a couple of years; but it was empty.

Lila and I were diappointed after talking to her so much about this great Saint. I took her to his cottage after a good deal of search in the coconut grove.

We learnt that the Saint had dropped his mortal coil a few weeks earlier. What a disappointment we felt when we found such a sacred cottage was full of toddy collectors

SWAMI SIVANANDA SARASWATI

Religion has been the power to unite individuals into groups and communities although in many places it has been the cause of much strife and disunion among mankind. Every system has appealed to the religious susceptibilities of its votaries to goad them either to war, persecution or murder. Whatever blessing it has conferred in private has thus been nullified in public. Swami Sivananda evolved a system of religious devotion which appealed to all, irrespective of their beliefs. He has not come to change people's religion, but to unite all religions without in any way changing their methods of worship.

Come one, come all, he spoke from the housetops. I have a common way of love and affection for all, so that they go to the Lord in serving their fellow-men for the sake of the Lord. "Indian spiritual thought soared higher and higher and yet higher, and discovered the unity behind all gods", he said. This has always been a great landmark in the history of all religions in general, for it marks the stage at which religion turns out to be the messenger of all peace and all blessing to the whole of humanity, instead of being partly good and partly evil, as it had been in earlier stages in various parts of the world.

This idea of Sivananda, carried with it a universal outlook, being based on a highly rational philosophy, as found in the Vedas and the Upanishads, and developed into its logical conclusion by discovering the unity behind all existence.

In his hundreds of books on all important subjects of religion, philosophy, health and well-being, he has rendered superhuman service to the world in bringing together all people into a family of true and honest seekers. His followers and

devotees belong to all religions-Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and Hinduism. They all heard him with rapt attention as he taught them a path to God, full of love and devotion, by a synthesis of all systems of Yoga.

He emphasised that the immense possibilities which the scientific advancement of the last century holds in its bosom for the realisation of the great hopes of poets and philosophers of the past ages, require for their consummation a new spirit, a new outlook and a new message, universal in its appeal, which will mediate between religion and religion on the one hand, and science and religion on the other.

Where is this message, this quickening impulse to come from? To this question, the eager minds of thinking men the world over turn towards India the great treasure of her spiritual and philosophical thought.

Swami Sivananda thus invented a mental telescope for the use of everyone to find out for oneself after reading any of his works to discover that there is but one God of whom all other gods are but manifestations. He said, "Truth is one; sages call it by various names. When all knowledge is sacred, how long can you suppress this truth and unity of man?" Being a great scientific thinker himself, and a successful medical man, he brought his scientific knowledge to bear in promoting his ideas.

It is the spirit of the Vedanta which has moulded all forms of Indian life, and has imparted a rich variety of Indian thought in its synthetic unity. Thanks to Sivananda Literature, this thought is slowly but surely gripping the minds of many thinkers of the West. Those who spoke of Hinduism as a bewildered mass of confused religious faiths, social ideas and practices are now

realising what Sivananda's work has done for humanity. Their minds are much clearer now and they are gradually realising the grandeur of his great service to everyone in putting up a very clean set of ideas on the path towards Unity and Self-realisation, irrespective of what our beliefs may be.

The effective impression of his books and systems of Yoga in various teaching Institutions of Europe and America has created a deep admiration in the minds of people, for spiritual thought everywhere. His wonderful success in creating selfless sages and saints to go over to Canada, U.S.A, Europe, Africa, etc. to preach his gospel of universal love and peace is no mean achievement. In virtue of this "Vedanta" as expressed by Sivananda, we are not only able to speak about but are in the process of achieving the fundamental unity of humanity itself. And if religious harmony, social progress and national solidarity are lacking in present-day India, the quickening impulse in this direction has been generated by Sivananda, which is now spreading, as it is the storehouse of all wisdom. This he has created by his deep study, his hard work and his powers of drive coupled with superhuman energy.

People a hundred years hence will perhaps not believe that a man actually walked on this earth, who achieved so much during his lifetime.

Swami Sivananda regularly celebrated the birth days of all great saints and messengers of God, who started the great religions of the world. The birth of Christ is celebrated on every X'mas day with great enthusiasm and so the birth of Buddha and of others. Unity in diversity is the test of universality, he thought. He never imagined a dull and dead uniformity. He said many a time that if one religion is true, then by the same logic

all other religions are also true. Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any Church, temple or mosque in the world, and every system has produced men and women of the most exalted realisation.

Thus, Sivananda, as a universal teacher, left every religion undisturbed. Neither did he start a new religion nor a new system of worship. He respected all religious teachers and paid homage to all the teachers of religions, and even of politics. He entertained Muslim philosophers, Christian bishops and Hindu Mahatmas, with great respect and admiration. He sincerely believed that all religions teach the same truth and lead to the same goal. He said, "Many are the names of God. Infinite are the forms of God that help to know Him."

His personal relations with his admirers were always very close. He took great interest in their religious and spiritual progress. He was friendly with their children. Each visit to the Ashram brought them not only nearer to God but also a determination to serve the people whenever an opportunity arose in their day-to-day life.

He never looked back. His actions were regarded as Divine, His thoughts superhuman, his talks most satisfying, and his prayers, worship and Satsanga most impressive. He brought not a new message, but a synthesis of Yoga, a synthesis of religion and a synthesis of the common human heritage.

SWAMI RAMDAS

It was in 1937 when we had just returned from Malaya and were in Ramanashram, that we first heard of Swami Ramdas. We met Mr. Maurice Freidman dressed in orange-coloured robes as "Bharatananda" who said to Lila that she should not go up to Panjab without meeting Ramdas.

I enquired, Who is Ramdas and what are his achievements? He said, "If you take a pot of honey and put a crystal of sugar in it-that is just like Ramdas-sweet, kind and loving." He is a Universal Papa for all.

Lila insisted that we must go to Kanhangad and Ramnagar to meet Swami Ramdas of Anandashram. As I had no more leave available to me and as all our 5 children were returning home from their convents-she reluctantly agreed to postpone the visit.

I went to the Ramanashram Library and purchased all the works of Swami Ramdas as this was the next best thing we could do at that time.

In the train I started reading to Lila "Vision of God" by Papa Ramdas. At Lahore we met all our children and travelled to Abbottabad in N.W.F.P. where I was posted.

Our whole family of 7 started sleeping together in one room on the floor leaving our bedsteads empty in all the 3 bed rooms. The routine was that we all enjoyed our morning and evening prayers-singing Kirtan and then reading Ramdas's books. During their three months' stay at home they heard and discussed all Ramdas's, life, its incidents, its depth of emotion and feelings and his abiding love of the Lord. It seemed that he had realised his union with God and now lives in the presence of God constantly.

A keen desire to meet him and to enjoy his divine company as soon as possible-was uppermost in our minds and we talked of him and his activities many times a day. We also started repeating "Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram" daily as this was his pet Mantra.

We then wrote a letter to him requesting him to kindly spend a few days with us. We said, it would be nicer if he would come to us rather than 7 of us going to him.

He wrote a wonder letter in reply and sent a copy of his tour programme saying that he will be delighted to meet me anywhere on any of those dates during his travelling on his way to Kashmir, he said it is lucky for him to visit the north after almost two decades during which he seldom left his Ashram.

The children had meanwhile gone to their schools and Somnath to the Prince of Wales's Military College, Dehra Dun. Lila and I drove to Amritsar in April 1938 to meet him-he was staying with that saintly poet and writer the late H. H. Bhai Vir Singh, famous for writing Punjabi spiritual verses.

Ramdas met us as if he knew us from the times immemorial he made us at home and we spent a very splendid day in his divine company. He promised that he would spend a week or two with us on his return from Kashmir in July wherever we wanted him to come and meet us and the children.

We rented a large house in Nainital for the season and took two months' leave in order that the four children could stay with us instead of staying in their schools and we wrote to Ramdas. Som from Dehra Dun and also Lila's youngest brother Krishen Dutt from the Academy also came there on their summer vacation. Krishen Dutt of blessed memory was later killed in a

battle at Singapore and Som my eldest son, gave his life to save Kashmir for us in 1947

Ramdas was received at Katgodam railway station by a noble friend whom I sent specially to meet him and bring him upto Nainital 22 miles by road.

When he inquired about his luggage-Ramdas replied "Ramdas carries no luggage and possess nothing except a haversack containing a change of a loin cloth and a vest. He never has any shoes and goes about in all weathers bare-footed and bareheaded and has only a cotton cloth to cover his body. The devotee was moved and tears rolled down his cheeks. Here was a great Self-realised soul who has practically no clothes and has spent two months in Kashmir travelling up and down in the hills and mountains in snowy weather without much cover for his body.

Ramdas was full of smiles all the time. He was in the pink of health and looked very fit physically. Hundreds of people overcrowded the lawns and all the rooms of the house to see him and hear him. Music parties came and stayed on doing Kirtan and Bhajan night and day.

It was impossible to be away from him as he was actually like a powerful magnet who attracted the whole town towards him.

He stayed for 13 days with us. It was really heavenly to see him and hear his few words. To see him was enough for us, as he appeared to have been sent by God for our uplift. Europeans, foreigners, Christians, Mohammedans all came to meet this Godly saint, who was above all castes, religions, tribes and creeds.

He belonged to all and preached the gospel of Love. Rev. Mr. Binns, the Principal of the Sherwood college came to meet him- -and later came to dine with us. After having a very nice talk- he invited Swami Ramdas to visit his college next mornings.

I took Ramdas and we went to the Principal of this European School. Rev. Binns was moved and overjoyed. He took us to every class-room and said, "Boys-here is Swami Ramdas a living Christ." The boys cheered and Ramdas blessed everyone.

I also took him to the "All saints Girls college"--the same thing was repeated by the nuns there.

As it was very cold and wet in Nainital due to the rains I brought

a pair of Rubber shoes for him.

These he refused to wear saying "Ramdas being a servant of Ram-will not wear shoes." He always addressed everyone as Ram-he replied all letters starting with the phrase, "Beloved Ram". He thus thought and believed that everyone was Ram and he was a servant or a Das of Ram.

He gave his Mantra to each of us and thousands of others and asked them to repeat it morning and evening and at all the times in the day whenever they could spare a few minutes and further said that they should constantly repeat it mentally, doing all work, for, and in the name of the all pervading Ram. We broke the house and accompanied him upto Bareilly. Before he left us-he said that he looked like a tomato because Lila has constantly cared for him and fed him well. He blessed us. We felt his parting after almost a fortnight's non-stop company when we hardly slept. His divine company made a deep impression on Som's mind who kept up his prayers. Krishen Dutt did the same. He said, he does not mind sitting at the feet

of Sadhus if they are of the same type and with achievements as of Ramdas.

We had his thoughts and messages regularly by his letters and particularly so, through his monthly magazine the "Vision". All through the second world war, his blessings and his encouraging messages kept our moral high and he regularly wrote to Lila and all our children who cherish his memory with love and respect.

In 1951 I received a telegram from him that he would arrive in Delhi by a plane with mother Krishna Bai and Swami Satchidananda his secretary and would stay with us.

We received him at Palam and drove him home to No. 5 Akbhar Road, my official residence. We had already fixed large Shamiyanas and tents for hundreds of visitors on the grassy lawns. Swami Ramdas continued this Satsanga and Kirtan for four days. Hundreds interviewed him.

Lila and I felt that heaven has again been created in our little residence. We deserve nothing but, God gives in plenty to all whether deserving or not

Our day started at 5 a.m. in his bedroom with Lord's name in company of all members of the household, while Ramdas used to lie in bed. Whenever he wanted to get down-Mother Krishna Bai said, "Papa keep lying down."

Papa Ramdas's doors were always open to everyone without any distinction, rich or poor, high or low-good or bad, all were always welcome with open-hearted love and affection. He answered questions freely without any hesitation.

As lots and lots of visitors came and asked him some trying questions-Papa was never upset or disturbed. He smiled all the

time.

Another great saint H. H. Sri Sharanananda Swami, a blind but a most intelligent and noble personality with a lot of wit came daily and stayed all day with Ramdas. He always answered all questions immediately in short phrases which were clear and to the point. This blunt method of replying hurt some people who used to be disturbed. Ramdas smiled and requested Dharm Devi to answer further arguments which she always did in her reassuring and divine ways. Both Swami Sharanananda and Ramdas always loved and respected Dharmji though she was very young in age. Her answers satisfied everyone and pleased them immensely when they heard a little girl getting up and making every thought crystal clear for their benefit.

It is unfortunate that we never were able to visit Ananda Ashram near Kanhangad in spite of Swami Ramdas's constant invitation. The second world war was the first obstacle. We were just unlucky. His favours and blessings were many. He used to say that he will never forget us and our children. On Som's brave death in saving Kashmir and Krishen Dutt's death in Singapore his letters and his sympathies were very beneficial and helpful in giving us strength to bear our great loss.

We always felt that Ramdas was with us all the time. Lila and

I had decided to visit him in his Ashram in December, 1963 but unfortunately he passed away in the end of July, 63 about a fortnight after Swami Sivananda's Maha Samadhi.

People regarded Sivananda as a world teacher and Ramdas as a loving mother to all while Ramana Maharshi was a father of the spiritual world.

During his world tour Ramdas conquered spiritually all he met and left a lasting impression in all the countries and climes he was kind enough to visit.

Ramdas's thoughts were always simple and his forceful and beautiful language touched all hearts. He talked from his pure and unalloyed heart to all regarding them as his Ram.

His mission of universal love was successfully carried out. He must have been one of those Self-realised personalities in the Lord's holy assembly who are sent for our benefit time after time to lead us on to His path.

He sincerely believed that the destiny of each one must be God-realisation and this destiny of every one must be fulfilled.

The Lord is Omnipotent. Men and nations cannot escape from their self-earned fate, but they are protected throughout their troubles and even saved from dangers by prayer and faith in the Lord.

A sincere prayer, and a childlike nature will turn you towards the Almighty, and by remembering Him not only by our lips superficially, but with sincerity of heart, specially before one begins any action.

During pleasing and joyful days, try to feel that they are a blessing of the Lord and in troubles try to think that it is very much like a medicine to heal your inner disease. Never fear Him, as He is all merciful.

God is not remote from the world. He is always here and now. God is a spirit which is hidden in every man nay in everything throughout this universe.

If you see any beauty in nature, a beautiful landscape for instance do not worship it for its own sake, but remember that it is beautiful because of God being present in it. See the Divinity in objects and people, and do not be so captivated by the outer forms that you forget the inner spirit which gives them life-he told me.

Whatever happens is by His will and what seems like free will, really works by His power. It is best to accept His will and one will not tremble under sorrow if one looks to Him for the strength to endure them.

With his frankness and his loving smile-he conquered all. He never thought of himself but of others. We are very much poorer by his passing way and that self-realised saintly soul Krishnabai is broken hearted but works day and night in order to carry out Papa's mission of love until her last breath.

SRI DHARM DEVI

In 1937 when we were visiting Sukhchain (Swami Sevadas) at Batu Pabat near Singapore in Mayala, we used to sit with him in prayer between 4 and 5 a.m. every morning. He used to be up at about 3 a. m. and after a quick bath he used to collect flowers for worship singing most loving verses for God; we used to hear him attentively.

After a few days' stay we also started sitting with him in prayer and meditation. On one of those blessed mornings I saw a vision of a tiny girl putting her hand on my head and smiling. I had never seen this face before. I mentioned to Lila and Sukhchain of this and made a note in my diary. It was on 21st November, 1937.

When Swami Ramdas stayed with us in Nainital in June or July 1938, he asked us to meet a Divinely inspired girl of eleven in Lahore on my way to Abbottabad. He was pleased to meet her as she lives constantly in the presence of Lord Krishna and thinks and talks of Him constantly. An extract from the Vision of August, 1938 is given below. This article was written by Ramdas himself.

"During Ramdas' visit to Lahore, he came across a remarkable girl. She was found to be fully intoxicated with Divine Love. Her shining face suffused with smiles of spiritual ecstasy and the spontaneous flow of words replete with wisdom from her lips bear witness to a rare manifestation of the Divine spirit in one so young and innocent. Ramdas felt immensely happy in her blessed company on three occasions. Her talks are so fresh brilliant and elevating. When Ramdas saw the girl, he made up his mind to present to the readers of the Vision, a short life-

sketch of the girl... Sri Dharm Devi did not at her birth manifest any unusual sings prophetic of her later spiritual greatness. But when she came to the age of three, she evinced a whole-hearted love for Lord Krishna. She would embrace whatever happened to be before her as the image of Krishna. She had declared that she was inspired by Krishna, who had sent her into the world, to preach the gospel of Divine Love, for dispelling ignorance and the consequent misery. In her childhood, her only play was about Krishna and Radha--such as Rasalila, the Divine play of hide and seek. At the age of five she had for the first time the experience of Prem Samadhi or love trance which lasted for about ten hours-Her father used to have talks with her on the love and knowledge of God and she was intelligently discussing this subject.

At present she remains in a continued state of Divine intoxication, always thinking of her Lord Krishna. Sometimes she has addressed large audiences on spiritual subjects. Interested persons go to see her and when questioned she replies intelligently and with amazing promptness... Sri Dharm Devi is small in stature and build for her age. There is an abundance and playfulness in her movements. She is totally free from shyness. Her face is always aglow with a strange lustre. Her eyes are mostly closed and they have a contemplative look in them. When she is emphasising a point by appropriate gestures she keeps her eyes open for a time and we see in them an unusual brilliance mingled with tenderness. The replies to questions put to her pour out of her mouth in a pleasant spontaneity. You are dazzled by them, for they are so full of wit and wisdom. Further she speaks with confidence and authority. She is simple in her ways and humble in spirit. She

displays love for the Society of saints. She is manifestly intoxicate with the love for Krishna.

A report of a few questions put to her when Ramdas was with her and her replies will further enlighten the readers about this Divinely inspired girl:

What does the Bhagavad Gita teach us?

Brahmajnan or knowledge of God.

Q: What makes you talk?

A: It is Krishna who talks through me.

Q: What is to be done for realising God?

A: Seek the Society of saints and do Kirtan.

Q: How to know a saint?

A: By the Light he radiates and the deep impression he makes on you by his words.

Q: What is the Sadhana for getting the Darshan or the vision of Krishna?

A: Love is the way. Lay your intellect at his feet and love Him with all your heart and you will attain Him.

Q: Do you mean intellect is useless?

A: No, intellect is useful in discriminating the real from the unreal and making Krishna your goal. After that, lay quietly the intellect at the Lord's feet. Do not worry by trying to understand Him by its help. The Lord wants the undivided love of your heart.

Q: What is the best kind of Yoga?

A: I find whole-hearted Prem for Krishna is the way. Q: Which is the greater vision? the vision of Krishna in His Avataric form or the vision of Him everywhere and as everybody in the universe? A: Certainly, to behold Him as all and in all is the greatest vision.

Q: One of the friends in our group requested Dharm Devi to initiate him into the method of meditation. She took him to an adjoining empty room. Soon after we heard a sweet and enthralling strain coming from the room. The girl was reciting in a high but a measured tune, "Radhe Shyam".

The friend who was taken for initiation admitted that he was greatly impressed. Another sight which produced a touch of enchantment on Ramdas was this. Dharm Devi was asked to call Krishna by her favourite manner-"My Lord or mere Prabhu" she warned us that she could not call him thrice for if she did so, she would go into a trance for several hours, but she would call him only twice. We agreed. With a charming smile, eyes nearly closed and face uplifted, the words, "Mere Prabhu, mere Prabhu" issued from her beautiful lips with all the sweetness and rapture of love. We were thrilled."

Principal N.B. Bhutani of J.S. Sindh College, Karachi saw the girl at Lahore in May 1938 and formed the following illuminating impressions of her and wrote to Ramdas:--

"I saw this extraordinary girl in the house of my host. She is only about 11 years old. Several of us have faith that God exists-whether as a power or a person, really does not matter, and some of us are more serious about it, and would like to love Him, see Him, and even go to the length of making sincere

effort to draw nearer to Him. But I at any rate had never felt before like what I felt now, in the presence of this girl, regarding God's existence. It had never occurred to me that there could be, now and here, in this world, a person who was always consciously talking to, and of God, as we talk to and of one another. This little girl was all the time conscious of His presence and dealt with Him as we do with human beings. It was indeed wonderful.

For the first time in my life I felt, in this sense, that God was real. So then, it is possible to see Him and communicate with Him as we do amongst ourselves. All the time she was there, that was the only thought in my mind. I kept listening to her and observing her, no doubt. But the only thought I was conscious of, was: "So, God, really, does exist, and one can feel about Him as this little thing is doing. Had it not been for the fact that I myself saw the girl before me, I would not have believed a description of her, even if you had given it to me. I could not have of course said, "No" to you-but I would not have been affected as I was now.

"Does He look like any of the pictures you see here on the walls, of Lord Krishna? was the first question my host put to her. "Hoon! these are merely the workings of the painter's mind. My Prabhu. How can I describe Him? This tongue has no power to do so," and she moved up her arm quickly till the fingers touched the tongue, she was referring to. Must we remember Him as Krishna or as Rama? Which do you think is the better way of approach? "Any name will do?" she said. They are all one. It is a matter of temperament only. I call Him "My Prabhu" and she repeated that call twice and stopped. So sweetly with half closed eyes, full of joy and devotion did she

call out that name! She said that if she gave Him the third call, He would be there and she would get into a Samadhi, "I bow down before every one, Guru Nanak and all the great ones. But when He comes before me I prostrate fully and naturally" and before she had finished this sentence she had already fallen flat fully on the ground, with such a naturalness and ease that it was a sight to see.

"All is my Prabhu" every human being, animal, plant and stone." "So" my host added, "If I put my foot on the stone, I place a foot on God." "Hoon" as if your foot is not God. It is also God. So God's foot on God's stone."

"What shall we do, to see God as you do? "Call on Him with love" was the ready reply. It is very easy. Only love is required. And the first condition is to give up Buddhi; then only love comes to you." What about Karma Yoga then? "It is a roundabout way of approaching Him" and she started moving her hand on the ground, making out a roundabout curve and added: "You do not meet Him anyway, along that path. It is the same thing with Gita's Brahma Jnani."

"Are you ever separate from your Prabhu!" "Yes, He runs away sometimes. I then weep. I make great entreaties. But do you know that He responds more easily to scolding and abusing." I also sing to Him sometimes. I have made out some songs for Him myself." When requested her to sing one, she started at once to do so, with half-closed eyes the movements of the whole body and specially the change in the face showing a condition of entreaty, suffering and deep feeling. When she finished singing, she explained the meaning of the song which was briefly this:

"Why don't you come? I am prepared to give you all for your coming, my life, my soul. And even if you want me to give up all hope for liberation, I am prepared to do so, for your coming. Do come, or do as you please, I am happy as your obedient slave.

The last thing she said was: "Separation is also sweet. And what one wants after all is love for Him, and not necessarily Himself."

All of a sudden, then she got up and went away...we made haste to touch her feet.

What do you think? Mira Bai took long to meet Him. She had to go through Sadhanas, do the worshipping, pass her time in the company of Sadhus and go through a good deal of suffering before she met the Lord of her love. This girl has had to do nothing; she was born perfect.

When long ago, before the Talkies came into being, there was shown in Karachi a silent picture of Mira Bai. My wife, my sister and I had gone to see it. With tears in our eyes we had watched how Krishna came in response to her at the time of her difficulties and I remember we had a long conversation after the show was over. One of the things I said then was: If I had been living then what would I have not done to reach her feet but once. What must I feel now?"

On our return from Ramana Ashram over to Lahore, we went to see Dharm Devi. She was not there. We then wrote to Swami Ramdas and he wrote to us her proper address. I meanwhile learnt she was the niece of my old friend and class-fellow Dewan Lalchand Nayyar. I wrote and enquired from him if Dharmdevi was his niece and if so will he send her to me for a

day. He wrote and said that Dharm Devi was born as such and she must have done all her Sadhanas in her previous lives. He also said that he would send her along with his mother to spend a day with me leaving Lahore by the evening train on 3rd August, 1938.

The train arrived at Jhelum station at midnight and a tiny little girl came out of a 3rd class compartment with her grandmother and a common friend. I at once recognised her as she was the same girl I have seen in meditation at Singapore on the morning of the 21st November, 1937. This must be an amazing coincidence if not ordained.

I touched her feet against her will. She smiled. I said I had met her before. She smiled again as if she has known me intimately before in previous lives perhaps.

Reaching our residence she said, "Please ask anything you like just now as I shall be going away early in the morning." I said, she was to stay for the whole day as promised by her uncle. She did not reply. I added: "Please go to sleep, as it is already late and I have nothing to ask."

Her party then, took her away to sleep in a part of the lawn where arrangements for their comfort had been made. Before going away reluctantly she asked my name. I said, "Amarnath." She said, "Amarnath Jai Radhe Shyam. Now sleep."

At about 4 a. m. she woke me up by coming near my bed and calling my name. I got up and asked if she wanted anything. She inquired if there was a pencil and some paper. I went to the hat rack and took out an old notebook and a red-blue pencil which was kept there to write their names if any visitors called when we were not in the house.

She then asked if there was a place where we could sit undisturbed. As the house was locked up, we went up to the roof of the house. She sat on an old bed lying there and I sat on a chair nearby. We switched on the electricity. She was drawing lines on the paper and explaining to me various ways of God-realisation known to man in all the countries of the world. She said: "All paths lead to God, some short, some long and some circuitous. All will eventually reach Him." We sat there for about 3 hours. Not very attentive to what she said, I was looking at her very surprised to hear all she was saying. She was drawing various stages in each method of God-realisation as known to man. How does this little girl know this? Was a constant thought in my mind? Who told her all this? It seemed that she was born with this as she was so sure of the truth of what she said.

At about 7 a.m. we heard a horn below. Dharm Devi promptly got down to the ground floor. I followed. A young man came out of a taxi and said that he had been driving all night. He left Rawalpindi for Lahore to meet Dharm Devi to take her to his home in Rawalpindi where his mother was on death-bed. Her last wish was to see Dharm Devi for a moment before she died. As he learnt at Lahore that she was with us--he had arrived here to take her to his home. Dharmji at once sat in the car and asked the driver to go. I requested them to have a wash and some refreshments as they were tired. They agreed to delay their departure by half-an-hour. How did Dharmji know last night that she was going away? Was the question which came up again and again before me.

I took out my car and then requested Dharmji to sit in front with me, her grandmother and Mr. Gupta behind. The taxi was asked

to follow. Throughout the 76 miles drive to Rawalpindi Dharmji was constantly singing and dancing in the car. We were thrilled.

On arrival at our destination the taxi led us to the house where the mother was lying ill. There was an old "Krishna" number of the Urdu "Milap" daily paper from Lahore. On the title page was a picture of blind Surdas absorbed in singing and playing his instrument while baby Krishna was attentively listening. Dharmji made a sign of picking up with her fingers the picture of Baby Krishna and putting it on the patient's heart said loudly "Sit here". The woman smiled, folded her hands in salute and expired. Dharm Devi left the house followed by us in spite of the earnest entreaties of the inmates of the house to prolong her stay.

I then drove to the residence of the Saintly Vasudev, Post Master, Rawalpindi. He was pleased to see Dharm Devi and was overjoyed on this surprise visit. He took no time in collecting musical instruments and his fellow-devotees and thus Bhajans and Kirtans started. Mr. Izzat Rai the officiating D. C. came and asked most searching questions and felt lucky to have met her. After this wonderful Satsanga we left for Jhelum. We felt transported to higher regions, with this deep spiritual fervour and we thought that God was there. Verses came out automatically from the lips of this girl, verses which were full of deep love and pangs of separation from her beloved. What a spontaneous flow, continuous and apparently automatic without much care or thought. When she spoke, she spoke with a depth of feeling seldom seen by us before.

Arriving at Jhelum she inquired if there was a room where she could sit silently without disturbance. I opened the door of my

office and the library. She went in with me, bolted all the doors and windows and asked me to sit down. She sat in front. "Amarnath", she said, "shut your eyes and empty your mind." I pleaded my inability to empty my mind. She said, "You can make an attempt whole-heartedly." I said "I shall try." She said, "Henceforth you have to do nothing. I shall do everything."

After sitting quietly like this she recited with her usual melodious voice "Radhe Shyam, Radhe Shyam" and asked me to get up. We opened the doors and windows and we went out. I was very much moved and very much impressed. Later at about midnight they left for Lahore.

After a few days, I got ill and started high fever. I prayed to the Lord and then wished if Dharm Devi should come again. It was perhaps one o'clock in the afternoon when Dharm Devi was in her village at Gujeran district. She woke up her grandmother and said, "I wish to go to Amarnath, he wants me and he is not well." They left for Jhelum and arrived there at midnight and rang up from the station saying "Amarnath-I have arrived."

I was amazed. How did this little girl know that I was ill and wanted her noble presence?

She stayed for 4 or 5 days. We found that her physical body was not healthy. A thorough examination was made and medical investigations were done. It was found that she was suffering from about 35 diseases and she did not know. Every type of helmenthic infection was there, severe cough and pleurisy was there. Chronic dysentery was there.

It was found on investigation that her health was neglected for many years. People never left her alone. Devotees occupied her throughout the day and she did not have a complete rest and

sleep at nights. There was no time for regular meals and she was asked to eat all sorts of sweets many times a day. This sheer and ignorant attachment of lady-devotees ruined her health. There was no control over her food and the quantity necessary for good health. The lady-devotees worshipped her as an incarnation of Radha. This little girl never had any time of her own except when she went in deep trances. This happened sometimes, many hours a. day, after which she woke up refreshed.

A lady had to be constantly with her as it appeared that she did not know her physical environments or surroundings. If she went to the bathroom she remained there for a long time, minutes going into hours. Her mother would get angry and pull her out. She would say, "Oh ! why are you forcing me to come out. He had just come as a handsome baby and I was just enjoying His company. When you pulled me out He went away to my great disappointment.

At another time, she was washing her hands with soap over a running tap, but looking up towards the sky. This went on for a long time. The mother got disgusted and pushed her away. She said, "When I am unfortunately born, I am not permitted to talk to my Lord. He had just come to play with me and you have disturbed us." Incidences like this happened day in and day out. This little girl was so very different from others of the same age. People in cities and towns turned out in hundreds to see her and talk to her. She was never shy and had a sense of humour. I do not personally believe that she knew very much about the ages of the visitors. I was more than 4 times of her age, but she called me always by my personal name.

Her parents permitted her to stay with us for about 6 months for treatment and care. This was done. She recovered completely. Her meals were regular and suitable and no extra things were permitted. Visitors and devotees were not permitted to offer any eatables. Her physical body became fit and healthy.

Much against the will of her people, a regular study was arranged. The devotees protested and did not like our idea of education for a spiritual being who was already perfect in everything and knew all the scriptures.

I entreated, saying that even Lord Krishna and Rama went to school. Her knowledge was so deep and she was such a genius that she passed Prabhakar examination in Hindi at the age of 14. She seldom went to school, but books were brought to her for study at home.

When I returned from Egypt I purchased a whole set of "Hindi-English self-taught books and took them to her to study and take the matriculation examination in "English", in three months' time. She would not agree and said she was not going to study this foreign language. I said "I have already paid the fee for admission to the examination in March and you need not study if you do not want to. But remember, you have no right to deprive so many people from hearing your words because they cannot speak Hindi." This went home.

I heard in February from her father that she was not too well and said that she was not able to prepare for the examination and refused to attempt it. I wrote back requesting him to take her to the examination hall on the due date and leave her there. She need not pass, but should attempt it. This was done and she

passed the English matriculation examination in the second division.

During her six months' stay with us, she insisted on my writing whatever she dictated. After return from the hospital, I used to sit down and write whatever she dictated. This was her first book "Separation of Krishna from Radha". She never stopped dictating. Her words and her verses, her stories and her poetry came out in a continuous flow like a torrent. What an unending storehouse of knowledge it was?

My fingers used to get fatigued of writing, but not she. Lila said, "He cannot write any more today as his hands are tired."" "Why should he get tired so soon; only 10 to 15 pages have been written" was her usual reply. It was an amazing sight to see this little girl of eleven dictating spontaneously such beautiful prose and poetry without any study. New songs used to come out of her lips we tried to write them-but this was not always possible as we were absorbed in watching her various movements, her moods and her dances in ecstasy and her singing melodiously specially when she saw clouds and when she was fascinated by the rain.

Every evening we used to drive to the Jhelum canal to sit and watch the running water in a peaceful atmosphere. Dharm Devi constantly related stories of Krishna and His Lila at Brindavan and Barsana.

After a while she usually went into a deep trance which we all watched with great fervour. People started collecting daily on this lovely spot to enjoy her talks, hear her answers to questions put to her and her love trances.

We all pray all the world over. This little girl was a strange devotee of God, who prayed in her own wonderful way.

She said, "O my Lord come!" tears started rolling down her cheeks on uttering this little phrase after a moment. She again said, "O, my Lord come"! and lo! her eye-balls rolled upwards and she went into a depth of feeling which only a few can do. Uttering the phrase three times was almost impossible as she had already attained the deepest state of ecstasy. Eyes shut, body very stiff and fallen on the ground as if dead. One could put fingers into her eyes and find no corneal response. The corneal reflex was found completely absent. This is what is done in an operation theatre when surgery is needed. You can cut any part of the body without her knowledge. This lasted for many hours, at the end of the shorter or longer periods she slowly came back to the world the body muscles softened the feet and hands moved and after a time the eye-balls came back to the normal position. All fatigue gone and she starts singing and dancing in the joy of meeting her Lord and Master. This was repeated again and again. Every evening we had to carry her deeply unconscious back to the car and home. It was never easy to lift her up by even half a dozen devotees.

Once she said, "Amarnath, I shall show you the Lord and you can have His Darshan if you are sincere and keen." A little while later we were driving in the car with her grand mother sitting behind. She was getting deep in thoughts with her eyes closed. She suddenly said, "Drive off the road into an open area as soon as you can." This was done she again said, "stop." "See the Lord sitting on the bonnet of the car playing his flute. Don't tell again that you have not seen Him." The grand mother said, "Dharm, please show me also." Dharm replied, "Bhabiji, do not

disturb us." Next minute she was lying flat on the seat in her usual deep trance from which she recovered after midnight.

On another occasion, she locked herself in for almost a whole day, when her people got worried and prayed to God to take care of her as she had nothing to eat all day. She just opened the door and said, "I am perfectly fit and happy. The Lord has been feeding me with sweets and other things: Do not worry. I am no longer hungry. Let me play with my Lord and she bolted the door again.

In the afternoons, she used to organise Ras Lila. It was lucky for us to see her acting beautifully as Lord Krishna or Radha or Vidurani or other parts and also training and teaching other actor's, men, women or children continuously, telling them what to say, utter or sing without interrupting the enacting of the Ras. She was thus the producer, prompter and heroine all put together.

Her energy, her keenness and her activities were beyond praise. She took full advantage of her superintelligence. I wondered how and when did she learn all the stories and lives of devotees and actions of the Lord.

She was bold, abrupt and truthful about the replies she gave to questions and the statements she made.

Once Sri Swami Brahmananda, a known Sanskrit scholar came from Banaras and called to see Dharmji. As we were away towards the canal, a note was left for us giving the address of the Swami and the public lecture he was delivering on Yoga.

On my request, Dharmji accompanied us to the place. We were late and sat on the ground far from the platform. The Swami was lecturing on the various bodies, the material body, the finer

mental body and root-body-Dharmji shouted why have you forgotten the Turiya state? As there was a pindrop silence the Swami heard it, stopped lecturing and came towards Dharmji he insisted on Dharmji accompanying him to the platform. She was asked to sit on the table much against her will, but was prevailed upon to say what she was shouting about. Everyone heard her with rapt attention after which the Swami continued his lecture. He said, "We are lucky to have Dharm Devi with us who knows all about Yogas without having learnt from anyone. She is born with this knowledge."

When she was about 7 years old, she saw an old man Nanak Chand by name who seemed to be very sincere about the worship of God-particularly through the path of Love. After a few visits, she saw that he did not walk erect as his back was bent and painful. She said, "Why don't you walk erect" and she touched the back. Through Lord's grace he was surprised that he became erect. Tears rolled down his cheeks and he touched her feet much against her will. He was so moved that he visited her at least once a week or oftener wherever she might be staying. He carried sweets for her. He built a temple at Gurudaspur and named it Govind Mandir. From the look at Radha's statue there he used to say, "Now Dharmji is not well. She is feeling warm. She is starving" and other things. I had the honour and pleasure of meeting him and he related to me how with one touch he was cured of his deformed spine and became erect and remained so ever since.

When about 6-8 years old, she addressed everyone as "Mother made of earth, father made of earth, sister made of earth and aunty made of earth. She said, "We are all nothing but a bit of earth in which God has put the breath of life."

Once when she was having her dinner and her parents were sitting with her, the mother asked "Dharm, whom do you love most-your father, your sisters or me"? Without the slightest hesitation she said, "Actually I do not love any of you-I only love my Lord." The mother became angry and said, "We give you food, we give you a place to live in and we give you clothes to wear and you do not love us. Where is your Lord? He gives you nothing." Dharmji replied, "You give me nothing, you have never given me anything, you are not capable of giving anything and nothing belongs to you. If my Lord gives you things for me, then and then only you are enabled to pass them on to me. If He stops giving you anything, you will not be capable of giving it to me or to anyone else."

The father got angry on this and so did the mother. After a few days he was retired at a very young age from his service in the Military accounts department as surplus to their requirements. This created a great disappointment in the household as he had no job to go to.

Dharmji, meanwhile went away to her aunty and stayed with her for some years as happy as a lark.

After some years, her parents went to her and requested that she might pray to her Lord to give him a job. Dharmji said, "I shall not request my Lord for the grant of any worldly favours but if you repent and become a devotee of the Lord and love Him instead of remaining a dry philosopher having no faith in the Lord, the Lord might bless you and give you something to do." It is amazing that after a short while he applied for the same appointment he had before and succeeded in getting it permanently.

Earlier in his life he did not believe in Bhajans, Kirtans or the path of devotion but was a well-known Vedantin. He used to argue with Dharm Devi. He said once she appeared to him in the form of Siva with a trident when he was asleep. She said, "Two people cannot live under one roof-one who loves God and the other who argues in his philosophical manner and tries to reason out everything. No reasoning is necessary in the path of love." Pointing the trident towards him, she said, "Will you love and worship God like the way I do or will you not." He folded his hands and said that he would do so in future. He thus became a follower of Bhakti Yoga ever since.

Dharmji never permitted anyone to touch her feet and if anyone succeeded, she used to not only touch his feet but kiss them. Everyone, therefore, was afraid to do so.

She used to say: "Do not touch my feet as I am only a bit of earth; only pay respects to God" pointing the sky with her fingers.

In 1939 I took her to Brindavan. It was her first visit in her present incarnation. She seemed to know all the lanes, by-lanes and the important temples. She led us on from one place of worship to another as If she was familiar with some of them. At the site of some, she went into her usual depths.

During my visits to Brindavan after the partition in 1947, she introduced us to many young lady-devotees whom she thought to be "Gopikas" of the present-day. This fraternity of young souls intoxicated with the love of Lord Krishna spent all their time and energy in a sincere search for their Lord and doing free and selfless service. It is a great honour and pleasure to

know them and visit them whenever possible as they never leave this abode of their Lord.

(1) Shri Santoshji. A Gopi of rare attainments, she hails from Jhelum district in West Punjab; from her early age she was found to be intoxicated with Lord Krishna's love and remained silent for many years. She seldom opened her eyes to see anybody or anything as she had one and only one desire of meeting Lord Krishna face to face. Shifting to Brindavan eventually, and spending all her time in meditation, prayer and singing of Lord's songs she pines for His vision and has no other interest in the world except to meet the Lord and to serve His people. One feels uplifted in her sacred presence and forgets the world and its worries.

(2) Sri Sarlaji. Sings and plays a harmonium doing Kirtan and Bhajans. She is totally blind. She is absorbed in her devotion to Krishna. Once it was raining hard when she insisted on her visiting Sri Bihariji's temple. Poor Santosh had to carry her and help her to be there. On her return, when I asked her the advantage of taking so much trouble to go so far for the Darshan to the temple while all the time she was not capable of seeing the image of the Lord as she was blind. She replied, "I know I have no eyes to see Him, but do you not realise that He can see me when I go in front of Him" Her faith in the Lord sustains her and in spite of many physical disadvantages and disabilities she and Santosh are contented and happy as they feel that they live in Brindavan-the special abode of the Lord where He lived, played and had His Lila. They relate the various Lilas of the Lord and His activities, as if they were the eye-witnesses of the same, ages ago. Dharamji, their companion feels the same.

(3) Ushaji. After passing her M.A. from the Punjab University this gifted devotee was the Principal of Sanatana Dharma High School, Ambala cantonment for many years. She has now discarded this worldly life and settled down in Brindavan. She spends most of her time in meditation and prayer, Bhajan and Kirtan. She observes silence most of the day (except at fixed hours), when her devotee friends visit her. Some of these were also lady-teachers on her staff at Ambala. They followed her example and have now settled in Brindavan awaiting Lord Krishna's arrival. They have visions of Him. They go to the Yamuna river on moonlit nights and sing His praises and describe what they see and what they hear. They live in tune with the Infinite constantly and have their being in Him. They have discarded all worldly relations and are happy in their self-chosen life of austerities, prayer and ever fresh thought of Lord Krishna.

(4) Shri Mata Krishnaji. When about 12 years old, she visited Brindavan with her parents. She had her visions and thought Brindavan to be her eternal home. She refused to go back and stayed on there permanently. On retirement, her father with his family shifted to Brindavan to be with their pet daughter.

Although living with her parents, she kept her vow of silence throughout the day. She never spoke a word to anyone, slept on a mat on the floor, put on white Khadi and spent all her time in Sadhana. Later on she met her Guru and started Bhajan and Kirtan with him during certain hours of the day where only certain devotees and the seekers-pure in heart-were permitted. This went on for years. Both kept the vow of silence night and day except in Satsanga. When they sang, did Kirtans and gave talks on spirituality giving details of the path of love towards

the Lord. They have both now taken Sannyasa and live as such in orange-coloured clothes. Regular hours and sincere devotion have improved them physically also. They have published many books on the path of love and the pangs of separation a devotee feels until he meets the Lord, the object of his search.

These two great saints have attained the highest state of realisation in Brindavan. A visit to Brindavan without a pilgrimage to their place means an unfinished journey to the Home of the Lord. They see no visitors now as they observe silence and solitude.

Having attended many Satsangas of this holy fraternity I always felt transported to the regions where one seldom aspires to reach mentally. The pleasant taste of their spiritual presence remains for a long time afterwards and one's heart goes down in gratitude

boli These great saints proclaim that there is no easier and surer path to save the ignorant and suffering world than the singing of the sacred names and glories of the Lord who is the saviour and the controller of the Universe. They have studied Bhagavatam for many years and advise everyone to study it regularly.

Lord Krishna's divine manifestations, glories and exploits and the shining example of His great devotees demonstrate to the world the superiority of the path of Divine Love. These devotees, whose surrender to the Lord is complete, have all their thoughts centred on Lord Krishna. Their words glorify Him and all their actions flow in the loving service to the Lord in order to lead one on to the right path and liberate him from the toils of life.

They say that the senses are given by God even to the crawling worms who subsist in filth. The real purpose of human life is to rise above the animal and human levels and become divine. A wise man should, therefore, strive only for the happiness which is everlasting. It is, therefore, necessary for this purpose to withdraw the mind from all worldly enjoyments and concentrate on the love of God. All other loves are useless.

The soul-ravishing stories of Lord Krishna which Dharm Devi and her godly companions constantly relate, stimulate the mind so that it remains intoxicated with the remembrance of the Lord.

They appeal to us to seek the Lord. We try to seek wealth to satisfy our urge for pleasure. Desire seeks satisfaction. Wealth helps us to get this satisfaction to some extent. If not checked by ethical and spiritual values and discipline, this urge for pleasure becomes an endless urge, every satisfaction raises many more urges for pleasure. Desires leave man a prey to many drawbacks, sins and shortcomings. This cannot express the true glory of the human spirit. This glory can only find expression through control of one's sensual nature. This is called renunciation the eternal message of religion: seeking freedom from senses. True freedom will only come through renunciation. Bib God says, He has created all things in the world for our enjoyment, but how to enjoy? is the question. He says, "Enjoy as I enjoy. Do not be entangled, do not touch them, enjoy at a distance. Do not pluck a flower, but enjoy its colour and its fragrance from a distance as I enjoy." There are some other such saintly personalities in Brindavan awaiting the arrival of the Lord like Mira but all of them do not desire to be known.

SHRI ANANDAMAYI MA

It was in 1942 that I had the rare privilege of meeting this self-realised lady saint at the Lakshmi Narayan temple. While Kirtan was going on at about 9 p.m. she arrived with some of her devotees and quietly sat down on the seat allotted to her.

Her beautiful and Divine face was full of smiles surrounded by an aura of heavenly light and grace. She did not seem to belong to this world. A thought came to my mind that such rare personalities who are in tune with the infinite, come but very seldom for blessing common mortals engrossed, throughout their lives, in useless, worldly activities. They remind us of the Heavenly Great Source whom we have to join sooner or later. Although looking at us she seemed to be mentally away somewhere else. Although physically sitting with us, she was soaring in higher regions of spiritual attainment.

It was obvious, that, she was in a type of trance which was too deep for us to fathom. When alone in solitude with her, I requested her to give me some lead towards the inner path. She said in a calm and pleasant mood, "Father, never forget the Lord even for a second, keep thinking of Him day and night whatever place you might be at and whichever work you might be doing."

Our ignorance leads us to think that we ourselves work out our own destiny and that of the nations of the world. All this is but a bewildering illusion, a blissful cry. It is the natural cry of the heart of all human beings, young and old It is one through which they can invoke the aid and the grace of the Divine Mother (Power) that rules the universe. She plays out her Lila by creating the universe, maintaining it and finally absorbing it

into her Eternal Being. She is herself the illusion of Maya that binds and blinds people with the notion of being separate and independent entities and agents.

I had the honour and privilege of sitting in Her Blessed presence on many occasions during the last 26 years and feel that she is the most visible manifestation of the Infinite and a lady-saint of the highest attainments in our country at present. She seems to be the visible embodiment of what we call the Infinite Lord. If we try to enthrone her in our hearts and clean our inner temple and permit her grace to influence our actions, our thoughts and meditations, our prayers and out pourings, her grace will be constantly with us. If we develop a firm belief that her sacred and physical body is housing her "Infinite Soul" only temporarily, she will become automatically the object of our highest adoration. If any one of us could possibly develop this outlook in life, no other help will ever be needed or necessary for our spiritual advancement on the sacred and secret path.

If we are unable to imagine 'Ma' Anandamayi as above and beyond the limitations of her physical form, we should take up any of her numerous activities and imitate a bit of her selfless service to humanity. Her extremely pleasant and cheerful temperament, her peaceful, calm, cool and collected serenity of mind and body, her charitable and kindly nature, her magnanimity and her everflowing consideration of grace flow towards all. She looks at all with a sense of equality and fair treatment. If we could adopt one of these qualities and shape our lives and conduct accordingly we should be thrice blessed.

Anyone who has the good luck to watch her ways of life, her conversations, her expression of cheerfulness and joy, her simple humour, her movements full of grace, her concern about

the serious illness of her nearest devotees and others, her mode of dressing and her ways of eating, shall know that her every action is unique in all respects. She appears to be much above even the best of us, as all her actions seem to be absolutely free, unmindful of others' opinions or ideas. Nothing can restrict her ways. The usual conflict of ideas and the conflict of will have no place in her dictionary as her ways of life are spontaneous and natural without any binding or consideration of the thoughts of others.

She has never any preconceived motive or plan. Even her constant movement from place to place is sudden without notice. No one knows what mother will do next and where she will be next day. Those who have known her always feel that her supreme will works only for the good of all and the welfare of all humanity. Her decisions are spontaneous without any selfish motive or organisation. Her whole life is a pleasant dedication in order to raise humanity to a Divine heritage over and above its shortcomings and selfish motives. She speaks but little and seldom, but she silently appeals to all to develop a burning faith in the Lord. She is so methodical that she does everything with a meticulous care. We must be certain that whatever happens in her place and under her direction, has always a true and hidden meaning though beyond our understanding and perhaps against our ignorant beliefs and ideas. Every action of hers is for our welfare. It is therefore necessary for us to admire her composure and accept her thoughts and actions in all humility.

Once I called to pay my homage to her at Haridwar while I was staying at Sivanandanagar. A Bhagavata discourse was going on in a large room and a Ramayana recitation was in full swing

in the temple in the next room. The blessed mother was in her own little room in deep thought. As soon as my arrival was reported, the Ma came out smiling in her own fascinating smile said, "Pithaji, please see Muni who is very ill and we have lost all hope of her recovery." Muni is one of her pet lady assistants who remains with the mother most of the time and accompanies her in all her travels. The 'Ma' was all attention while I was examining the noble patient. I found her suffering from a failing heart, Asthma, capillary bronchitis, swelling of the feet and puffiness under the lower eye-lids. I wrote some prescriptions and the mother stood there all the time. I am told that she has been spending most of the nights during Muni's illness near her bed side. Whether the Ma enquired as to the prognosis or not I said that it was not the medicines nor the careful nursing which would help the patient but your blessings-beloved mother-your blessings and blessings alone will cure her.

When she asked me to visit her again, I said, I shall be visiting every other day from Rishikesh as it was impossible to come and visit her daily.

While driving back to Rishikesh I thought that the lady would hardly pass a few hours. Two days later before entering Ma's room upstairs I enquired about the state of the health of Muni. I was surprised to know that she was better.

I went upstairs to see the patient, and mother kindly met me. I was told she has been with this patient most of the time. I was also told that it was not unusual for Muni to get seriously ill again and again but the mother's solicitude and her grace was keeping her alive in spite of so many serious diseases.

Miracles happen often, nay daily, showing that the mother has already reached a stage where time, space and causation do not come in her way.

If anyone is lucky enough to receive any instructions or advice from the mother, he should regard it as a rare piece of luck for him; with the grace of the Lord such chances are rare, as mother remains silent most of the time and blesses mentally all those who come in contact with her. When you reach Ma's presence, forget your opinions, individual judgments and ego, keeping your mind open for the grace of the mother to enter the cave of your heart. As soon as you become a silent witness and an unselfish onlooker in her presence, you will benefit greatly by her spiritual vibrations.

A few visits to the Mother will be enough for you to learn to devote a little of your time regularly and daily at fixed hours for contemplation and silent prayer. "Look forward to that hour" says the Mother emphatically and dedicate yourself for that sacred prayer without a break. It will pay good dividends, if no break is permitted in this hour of silent prayer. You will gradually attain perfection by this daily worship and your mind will become still-all stray thoughts will disappear.

Someone asked me, "What is your relation with the Mother, she is so kind to you." I replied "She is my mother." Everyone is equal in her eyes.

The intensity of love and adoration in our hearts will always have a positive response from her as she knows all and the depth of sincere feelings they have. Her vibrations go in all directions equally, unless your mind tunes in, you get nothing.

A little while ago, she uttered "Oh! he is safe one life has to be lost. When asked who is saved, she said, "Hari Vasudeva", while driving a car, there was an accident. It is amazing how she keeps a protecting hand over all who have faith in her benevolence.

Her grace, Her mercy and her compassion are flowing like, a torrent for one and all, this by itself should remove all worry, all failures and disappointments in us.

It is very difficult to know and understand this lady-saint who is a real mother to all and a Self-realised soul.

People who get intoxicated by a glimpse of the Mother, feel a sincere desire for development of faith and self-surrender to her will, throwing away all ambitions and desires for self-enjoyment-physical and worldly.

As you go on practising, you gradually begin to unfold yourself more and more and reach a stage where you notice flashes of Divine light illuminating your inner being. The process continuing regularly will transform all your actions-worldly or otherwise. Finally you will feel that the great Divine Mother, the power of the Lord-enwraps you completely in a loving embrace.

Day to day everyone notices how she welcomes people of all religions and all nationalities-how she accepts everyone without questioning their religious beliefs and customs, and helps him towards the goal of Self-realisation. How she pours out her good and kindly thoughts equally on saints, or sinners, rich or poor, great or small, in spite of their shortcomings and weaknesses.

A few years ago I had a lucky chance of being with the Mother and her nearest attendants in New Delhi in the compound of Rai Bahadur Narain Das' house before the Mother's Ashram was built. She seldom, if ever, stays in a home. She loves to live in a compound in the open or in a tent. By living nearby, I collected few salient points of her most wonderful spiritual life. She had little or no education; but her life of Divine attainments unfolded itself gradually but methodically.

1. It is said that her mother took this child to a Tulasi plant on the day after she was born. She placed the baby at the foot of Tulasi and rolled her to and fro on the ground. This she did daily for a year and a half. Anandamayi got so used to it that she herself went and rolled herself at the foot of this Tulasi plant daily.

2. From her early age, she was very much impressed by any prayers or Kirtans and manifested unusual ecstasy and rapture whenever she heard any Divine songs, prayers or Kirtans. These ecstasies would produce Bhava Samadhi or semi-consciousness even when she was 3 or 4 years old. This was not noticed till she became older.

3. It is said that as a child she used to have visions of gods and goddesses. She was taken once to a Siva temple on the occasion of a festival. She was sitting at the door of the temple. Ma says that when seated at the door, she saw Lord Siva come out of the stone Lingam and start dancing. This He continued for a long time in front of her, but stopped dancing and re-entered the stoneimage as soon as her relatives returned to her.

4. She remained unconcerned and silent most of the time. Her mother used to get angry when she was found to be absent-

minded even at the time of her meals. She never herself took any notice of these incidents as she says that she used to see the forms of many gods and goddesses moving in front of her eyes to and fro. Her mother told me that this state of mental aloofness and detachment from things around her was obviously apparent from an early age.

5. She had learnt the Bengali alphabet in two days, but she did not read very much although she was quick in answering all questions put to her from childhood. She was very indifferent to her studies. Those had to be discontinued after the lower primary class. She used to write Bengali in an unsteady hand, but now does not write at all. If requested to do so, her usual reply is, "This body has no idea of it now."

6. During her married life, she would pass into a state of Samadhi and trances although no one knew about it. Sometimes she would occasionally pass into a trance while cooking. When told of occasionally on such lapses, she never took the slightest notice of these scoldings. From a look of her face it would appear that these remarks were unnoticed as if they might have been addressed to a stone-wall. She did her household work and other duties with devotion and love. People used to work for her without her request, due to the spell of her Divine fascination. One of them addressed her as mother and remarked, "Today I am the only one who calls you mother, but a day will come when the whole world would call you Mother." She was 18 years old then.

7. She now started having those ecstatic moods and Prem Samadhi oftener, particularly so during Kirtans. These rare manifestations of divine moods drew more and more devotees towards her, when she was still a shy maid. She said, that at the

sound of Kirtan she would automatically forget whatever work she might be doing and her whole being was drawn towards the Lord her body became stiff and she used to fall on the ground remaining in such a state for some time. "At times she would stand erect with her arms raised above her head, her eyes fixed steadily without a flicker of the eyelids, her heels raised high and supporting the body at her toes. She stood motionless sometimes or swaying right and left with each breath. She would run to the place of the Kirtan dancing or walking fast gracefully. She would occasionally roll in Divine joy to and fro on the ground in a whirl over a distance of 15 to 20 yards. No one could stop her on such an occasion although she was usually very modest and never unveiled her face. She would sometimes run and dance bareheaded, entirely oblivious of the external world."

8. During such trances, it is said that her body would stretch and appear to be taller than usual or shrunk and looked smaller. At times it would become rolled up. People have seen her body throb and thrill with a strong emotion, her face swollen and red with profuse tears of laughs and then become stiff as in a stupor."

There were various moods and types of Bhavas frequently seen in her by the chanting of Lord's names at Kirtans and prayers. She showed various types of spiritual manifestations-Yogic exercises, control of physical senses. control of breath, gestures, and manipulations of hands and fingers appearing in her automatically without a teacher. She says that the various types of Sadhana which manifested in her body were beyond description. Mother herself has said, (when asked if she had no master)"It is true that this body had no initiation from anyone.

The father of this body used to repeat the name of Hari. This body asked him "What is the use of repeating the name of Hari." He explained. "Later on when a thought came to this body it used to repeat the name of Hari. Various spiritual exercises spontaneously manifested themselves." On the advice of her husband Bholanath she started repeating "Jai Siva Sankara Bum Bum Hara Hara." In spite of this the spiritual exercises did not cease but became intensified, "as soon as the household duties were over, this body would pass into a peculiar state and as soon as it sat down-the spiritual exercises started spontaneously and they came beautifully under the direction of the supreme will."

About her Pooja we learn from the mother that for a few months various gods and goddesses appeared in her and were worshipped by her. A deity would issue out of her body-complete with all associates and after worship would merge back in her body. Another would next turn up. Although there were no materials for worship she would feel that she herself was the god, the worshipper, the Mantra, the articles of Pooja and every other thing necessary for the Pooja. All the system and the process involved in the Pooja would work out automatically.

"Similarly automatic processes of Asanas and Pranayamas went on in the body and her breathing sometimes become hurried, slow or stopped altogether. She herself drew once a sketch of six Chakras or vital centres in the body and accurately described the position, structure and functions of each although the position, structure and functions of each she says she never read or heard about them before. When enquired what are these, She gave a clear answer about them. People have observed

peculiar radiance emanating from her body during this period of intense and automatic Sadhana and some devotees used to lose their consciousness by touching her sacred body.

She took very little food during this period as a matter of fact. She eats but little. She took only three morsels by day and three by night for 8 or 9 months of this intense Sadhana automatically carried out and beyond her control. Sometimes she went without any food for days together and yet remained healthy, cheerful and full of her usual vitality.

A wonderful phenomenon has been observed in mother's case.

Various hymns sometimes gush out of her beautiful lips before she passes out into a trance. Some of those are: "Thou art the light of the universe and its controller and guiding spirit. Do thou appear in our midst. Thou art the dispeller of all fear, do thou appear before us! Thou art the seed of the universe. Thou art the being in whom I reside! Thou art present in the hearts of all Bhaktas. Do thou, whom I find present before me, banish all fear from all beings! Thou art the embodiment of all the gods. Thou hast come out of me! I am the epitome of the created world! Thou hast come out of the Pranava the seed word and the basis of all existence. The truths in all Vedas are but tiny sparks from Thy own eternal light!"

"I seek refuge in Thee! Thou art my shelter and my resting place. Draw thou my whole being in two forms, the liberator and the devotee seeking liberation! By Me alone are all created in my own image! By me alone are all sent into the world and in me all find refuge! I am the final cause indicated by the Pranava in the Vedas! I am Mahamaya and Mahabhava all in one! Devotion to me is the cause of salvation. All are mine! From Me Rudra owes all his powers and in the Self-same I sing

to the glory of Rudra when he becomes manifest in all actions and in their cause."

When asked why she recites all this occasionally she simply replied, "Everything happens by itself, this body does not do anything by her own Will." Someone asked her, "Who are you?" She replied, "The absolute Brahman in the form of Narayana or Vishnu."

Her husband Bholanath became so overwhelmed with her spiritual powers and attainments that he became her devotee in course of time and felt that the Divine Mother's sacred body was pure and sanctified. Eventually he regarded her as his spiritual mother and called her so. Later on the mother also used to call her husband "Gopal" (Child Krishna).

Once in a state of Bhava Samadhi, she rushed to the tomb of a Muslim Saint near her place of residence at Shahbhag followed by all devotees including a Muslim. As soon as Mother went inside, she began to recite loudly the Kalmas of the holy Quoran and performed the Muslim Namaz. Everyone was amazed at this. When asked why? she replied, "This body dose not do anything, all this has come from within her by itself." The words, the tone and the mode came naturally and spontaneously. Not only this but the meaning of this became clear to her, she says automatically. Really nothing is unknown to her--her pet phrase is "things become outwardly revealed to her in obedience to Her Khyal (thought)."

I have noticed often that for a long time, Mother has not taken her meals or drunk water with her own hands. Someone has to feed her or give her a drink. On enquiring the reason for all this I found that:

"One day while taking her meal, she saw that her hand moved downwards instead of going upwards towards her mouth. From this she understood that taking meals with her own hand was coming to an end. A few days after this, before sitting down for a meals, she declared "Khukhuni will feed this body from today onwards. In her absence one of you may do so." I have had the honour of meeting and talking to this foremost lady-devotee who generally lives with her. Her name is Guru Priya Devi or commonly called Didi. Since that day taking meals with her own hand has ceased completely. The Mother, when asked, replied, "I see that all His hands are my hands. I do take food, therefore with my own hand."

She underwent many austerities and had passed many days with no light at all at night with one simple meal a day consisting of a few grains of rice.

When asked why does she think it necessary to move from place to place without notice and with a large following, her usual reply is: "This body neither goes away nor comes to any place, just as you go from one room to another or stroll about without feeling that any travelling has taken place."

I have heard her say sometimes that all her activities are really spontaneous and not prompted by will or purpose. They are not pre-arranged or planned. They are not influenced by her desire or any motive. I do not believe that she possesses the untrained will of a lay man or even the trained will of a Yogi. Every action
of hers appears to be only an expression of the great power beyond the will working from within her. Every action of hers is impersonal. This impersonality expresses itself in the universal mind as the universal will. It is so different from the individual will and motive.

As we know fully well that will implies self limitation to a certain extent. Sitting at the feet of the Mother one feels elated and the mind ceases to wander a bout-feeling that the radiations from her pure, unconcerned personality are constantly spreading around her deeply affecting everyone. It makes no difference whether the people sitting around her are sincere or not, receptive or not, faithful or not. Her movements in my opinion, are guided neither by the predispositions of the past nor by any considerations of the future. They are confined to the present and they rest there as in the heart of Eternity.

By having the good luck of sitting at her lotus feet on many occasions and in many circumstances I have come to the conclusion that she is always in a state of purity of thought and mind and that whatever comes to pass in her life of dedication is determined not by her physical self as we see her but is determined by the forces working from higher regions.

She belongs to that holy assembly of saints and sages, whom the Lord sends down to the world for leading us towards the source of all life, all light and all unity.

Her body is like a musical instrument giving out beautiful and inspiring notes, not by her own initiative but in response to the vibrations received from the cosmos higher above.

In 'Ma' we have a rare combination of various contradictory elements which make it difficult for me to form an estimate of the truth of her Being. She is, I think, untouched by Karma of any kind as she does nothing during morning, noon or night with any personal or selfish motive.

She believes in the gradual evolution of the human soul towards the Absolute Reality by a gradual process of Sadhana. The first

steps of the ladder are the right conduct in all states and conditions in order to purify the mind and dry up the continuous flow of various thoughts and ideas whereby the mind becomes higher, lighter and quieter by means of elimination from it of all the waters of worldly desires and passions. "Just as dry fuel," She says, "free from all moisture, takes fire easily and burns, in the same way the mind thus purified catches easily the fire of knowledge and becomes aglow." She calls this state as "Bhavashuddhi" or purity of "Bhava" "Chittasamadhana". She proclaims that this by itseif would be a great achievement and will make a seeker fit for the higher steps in the ladder.

If one or two lives are spent in purifying the mind and achieving the stage of right conduct, one should be satisfied and gradually advance towards the higher states of Bhava Samadhana and Vyakta Samadhana leading to Samadhi. She does not waste time over dry philosophy or talks of various stages of human progress, but lays a great emphasis or a practical life of dedication, prayer and selfless service which, by itself will take aseeker towards the Godhead.

GANGESHWARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

It was early in the year 1946 that I passed through Ahmedabad on my way to Mount Abu where I had gone on a very important mission. I found the railway station overcrowded with thousands of people and it was with much difficulty that I was able to get into my railway compartment. Strangely enough, in spite of the big crowd there, there was no noise; there was a pindrop silence. People in their hundreds tried to get near the windows of the compartment next to mine on both the sides of the train to get a glimpse of a Sannyasi, and carried with them bundles of flower garlands, sweets and other eatables. One rarely sees such a disciplined crowd on a railway platform, jam-packed and shouting Jai, Jai and Jai! I became naturally very inquisitive and wanted to know who the popular and respected religious leader was and if possible get acquainted with the person. When the train started I made up my mind to try to contact him. At the next halt I opened the door of his compartment and inquired if I could see the Swami for a minute. I was welcomed by a smiling disciple who asked me to sit down.

I observed that the venerable person was blind but healthy, clean and nice-looking and displayed an ever-smiling face. Dignity and reserve mingled in his manner, his face was preternaturally solemn but clearly reflected the inner calmness and the pleasant smile emphasised that coolness and satisfaction within. The faces of the three of his disciples who were in the same compartment reflected his solemnity with the self-same smile of calm and satisfaction. After some preliminary talks I found myself asking. "Swamiji, how can one get enlightenment?" The Swami replied: "God's grace is always

there, but are you sincere? A man must make himself ready, then no matter where he is, he will find eventually a teacher. And if the teacher does not come in a physical form, he will appear to the inward eye of the seeker." To my question as to how should one begin, the Swami answered, "Mark off a part of your time everyday to sit in a simple and comfortable posture which will help you to get used to sit quietly without disturbance and prepare yourself for clear thinking and control of stray ideas. Also take care to curb anger and control passion. Be regular. At first five minutes' effort is enough. After a month's sustained practice you may lengthen the time to ten minutes, after three months to twenty minutes, and so on. Sit straight. It will enable you to acquire physical poise and mental calmness. Calmness is very essential for any practice on the upward path. The body acts on the mind and the mind interacts on the body. They must go together all the time in order to succeed in practical development of your inner nature. Our only purpose for coming into the world is to attain spiritual perfection in order to unite with God." Talks on the existence of God and spiritual attainment went on for a couple of hours in a most profitable manner. The Swami was obviously well- informed and had radical views on spiritual and secular questions. He appeared to possess a vast knowledge of the scriptures. Presently Abu Road station, my destination, arrived and I had to get down, and I felt reluctant to leave this great saint's presence. Words came out of my lips: "Your Holiness, may I have your blessings and may I succeed in my difficult mission?" Though blind, he seemed to see my mind clearly and smilingly patting my back said, "You have that already, you will succeed. Things will happen as you desire, and I shall be with you now and for ever. I never leave those who come to me

and I am with them constantly. It is ordained by God." This meeting left a deep impression on my mind. How could this great Sadhu study and learn the Vedas, the Sastras, the Gita, the Upanishads and other philosophies and master them all utterly devoid of the important faculty of sight.

Ever since that first meeting, Swami Gangeshwaranandaji had all along been very kind and considerate and had given me a chance of entertaining him, and also the privilege of having had many subsequent meetings with him. On one occasion when he was indisposed, he had accepted to remain with us under our medical care and he was quite amenable to all our discipline, and by the grace of the Lord he recovered in a short time. During the course of his short stay we had the opportunity of holding quite a few discourses and singing of Sankirtans and Bhajans by his disciples. The Swami is a man of few words and his habits are simple. We were quite convinced that whatever he preached he exerted his utmost to stand up to it in his daily life. On invitation I had the privilege of visiting his Ashram at Ahmedabad, called the Ved-Mandir, which is a big building, an auditorium with a capacity to seat about a thousand people. The place is kept spotlessly clean.

I was given to understand that the Swami had a divine vision of Lord Krishna before he was five years old. He had an attack of small-pox, consequent to which he slowly lost his eye-sight. It was as though God had ordained that he should neither see nor be tempted by the things of the outer world of illusion.

Guru Ramanandaji, head of the Udasi cult, visited his parents in the year 1888 when the boy was seven years old and asked him to chant the thousand names of Lord Vishnu as well as the holy Bhagavad Gita. The boy took to those practices as a bird

takes to flight and spent twenty hours a day chanting the names. Gradually the veil over his mind dropped down and many miraculous events took place. Chandreswar, the boy who later became Swami Gangeshwarananda, was then eager for the life of a recluse but his Guru Swami Ramanandaji made him wait for twenty-four years before initiating him. When at last he received his initiation into the Udasi cult, the bright young Swami had actually nothing to learn in the way of spiritual discipline as his long years of austerities and single minded devotion had already raised his spiritual attainments to the entire satisfaction of his preceptor. Swami Ramanandaji now ordered the Swami to go to Kashi for still higher attainments in the ancient spiritual lore. He astonished everyone by learning Vyakarana, Nyaya, Mimamsa, the Gita, the Upanishads, the Vedas and other scriptures within a short span of three years, a course which would have demanded and taken at least twenty years for an average intellect, endowed with normal faculties. In spite of not having the faculty of eye-sight, with his keen intellect and acute memory he was such a formidable opponent that no scholar relished the prospect of entering into a learned debate with him. His unique method of approach, his manner of reasoning and his vast knowledge were enough for him to establish his correct point of view. His Guru Ramanandaji made him appear for the Shastri examination of the Punjab University which he passed with self-confidence and felicity. The leaders of the Udasi cult were then of the strong opinion that Swami Gangeshwaranandaji was not an ordinary Sadhu, but had come into the world with a special mission, for the spiritual uplift of the country, and was highly evolved mentally and spiritually and on the right path to attain the highest beatitude.

The Swami went on an epoch-making tour of India with a group of Sadhus, visiting places, teaching and preaching to the general public and the whole tour headed by him was a mobile University to impart knowledge spiritual. He built the famous Lakshmi Narayan temple at Amritsar costing about rupees eighteen lacs in order to create a place of worship for the pious and the devout. He maintained his calmness of mind against all odds and shouldered heavy responsibilities and possessed immense powers of administration and drive. He opened free camps on important occasions of Kumbha-Melas when thousands of devotees, ascetics, scholars and Brahmins stayed with him for whom he arranged for free board and lodging and distributed clothes for the poor and the needy.

During the Kumbha-Mela at Allahabad in the year 1954, Dr. Rajendraprasad, the then President of India, the Prime Minister (Sri Jawaharlal Nehru) and a large number of Governors and ministers were present there for a Hindu Cultural Conference, when I was approached by the military secretary to the President to bring Swami Gangeshwaranandaji to the Conference as the President desired it. Though Swamiji was very busy, he graciously acceded to my request to accompany me to the Conference. When he entered the Pandal the whole assembly stood up and the President vacated his seat for the Swami and the garland that was meant for the President was put round the Swami's neck by the President himself. Sri Gangeshwaranandaji is regarded as one of the fore most authorities in India on the Vedas, the Upanishads and other Hindu philosophies and doctrines, and naturally his discourses at the Conference were much enlightening and soul-elevating.

We observed that he usually never asked for any donations from his disciples and followers, but strangely enough whenever he wished to build an Ashrama, enough money came to him without much effort. When the Shrot-Muni Niwas was to be built at Vrindavan, he had no funds. Someone asked him as to how he would build it, the Swami said: "Why should I worry about such mundane matters? It does not behove an ascetic to go in for establishing Ashramas." It is believed that very night he had a vision of Lord Krishna who said: "Gangeshwar! Have you forgotten the message of the Gita? I am the doer and I have made this Ashrama as my abode at Vrindavan. Can you not merely play the role I assign to you?" The Swamiji was surprised. He was somewhat concerned as he had practically no money and was wondering as to how God would help to get over this difficulty. But as soon as he set himself to the task he received sufficient funds for the building. Then on, building of Ashramas was one of the life-works of the Swamiji but he had no private ownership of any of them. He had built many Ashramas but made public trusts of everyone of them and saw that his spiritual ideals were maintained, and in all the places daily prayers, discourses, singing of Bhajans, Sankirtans go on. Some of the main Ashram trusts are at Amritsar, Haridwar, Vrindavan, Kashi, Ahmedabad, Nasik, Bombay, Indore, Delhi, Rajwada and other places.

The Swamiji had all through intense love for his country although he remained away from the political field. He kept himself always well informed of all activities and occasionally had intelligent talks with the late Prime Minister, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, when he visited the Saint, and assisted him in taking keen interest in all his political activities. The Swamiji

possesses a far-sighted and clear-eyed policy in all matters. During the British rule, when there was serious political unrest in some native states, the Swamiji boldly preached everywhere and advised people to go in for active political work. He was held in high esteem by all the ruling princes of Kathiawar, Rajasthan, etc., and he succeeded in creating goodwill and peace between the rulers and their subjects. After independence the Swamiji sent his seniormost disciple, Sri Swami Sarvanandaji Maharaj, to Junagadh with the necessary instruction to preach spiritual and political ideas and thus he also, in a way, played his part in the state's merger with India. In the year 1947, before the partition, he advised all his- followers to come to India with their families, wealth and movable property before the 15th of August, that year. This saved many of them from great misery, and those who took his advice lightly suffered untold misery. lost their property and even lives.

Perhaps few knew that he made his rich followers in Bombay to build enough accommodation to house the refugees and spent over seven lacs of rupees in organising refugee camps in Saurashtra to receive the unfortunate refugees and to give them some sort of comfort. When China invaded India, the Swami donated large sums generously for the war effort and inspired his followers to do the same. The Swami has helped a good lot to give a reorientation of the Sannyasa Order and also in the formation of the Bharat Sadhu Samaj. He meets even the humblest of people with an open-hearted smile, full of love and affection. Sri Gangeshwaranandaji is held in high esteem by all the leaders of the country. During the Gangeshwardham's annual celebrations in Delhi recently, leaders of all

communities attended, including the late Sri Jawaharlal Nehru who had a high regard for the Swami. By his ever courteous and affectionate approach he has won the hearts of all the leading people including Sadhus and saints and they all co-operated whole-heartedly in every work undertaken by him. Among his devotees there are people of all religions, communities and countries. Rich or poor, learned or ignorant, young or old and men or women, all love and respect him and thus he has formed successfully one large family out of his disciples and followers. He always speaks at the end of a spiritual meeting after every one of the speakers had spoken and he speaks only for a few minutes which touched the inner cores of one's heart, mind and soul. When one listens to his short but inspired discourses, one loses all taste for the mundane matters.

The Swami is the head of the Udasi cult in this country which believes that the soul's individual bond of ignorance is cut away by the true knowledge while the universal bond of ignorance is cut away by the grace of God obtained through devotion. True knowledge is a prerequisite for salvation. Sri Swami Gangeshwaranandaji has elucidated this principle in his book, 'Bhakti Jnana Samucchaya Chandrika. His repeated advice to his disciples is: "A good recluse does not disclose his name, family, birth-place, learning, age, history, actions, vows, character and attainments. Silence is golden. Work without advertisement in a silent way. Detach yourself mentally and work as an instrument of the Infinite Lord." He never forgets anyone who once comes in contact with him and gradually instills firm determination in him which keeps him on the right

path. Though blind, he recognises everyone by the way he speaks he can even tell the age of the individual.

BRAHMACHARI SHUDDA

In 1945 I was requested to preside over a public meeting in Karachi where a man would show wonderful control over his body-functions including stoppage of his heart.

Before deciding to accept this appointment at a fixed time I inquired from Col. Taylor and Col. Matheson-my two medical specialists if they would accompany me.

After showing various feats of archery and other difficult Yogic postures, he asked me if I was prepared to ask him whatever I liked about the rate and rythm of his pulse.

"Make your pulse beat at 30 times a minute." He put his wrist towards me and requested me to count the rate. It was 30 times a minute. Both the senior British medical officers, who were with me also checked it up and agreed.

We requested him again to let his pulse rate be at 50, 40, 10 and 100 times a minute. He succeeded in doing so. We then told him to stop his pulse altogether and lo! there was no pulse felt in his wrist, or higher up in the arm. We then made him lie down on a sofa nearby and thoroughly examined his heart. We failed to detect any heartbeat. This was amazing and against all our scientific knowledge about the heart. While the heart had apparently stopped, his looks and his glow on the face was normal. The stoppage of the heart had apparently no effect on his life.

On our bidding, the pulse returned and his heart started beating rhythmically.

This strange exercise seemed to have no effect on his general well-being and he was as active as ever before. We asked him next to stop his breath and he did for a couple of minutes.

A huge pit was dug and he was seated in it. A cover of iron-sheets was placed over it and then bricks, mortar and cement. The pit was closed for 24 hours in the presence of some police officers and the public. A guard of police men was placed on duty at the pit. No one was permitted to go within three feet of it.

We visited the spot 24 hours later and the pit was opened after some recitations and worship. In the presence of a huge gathering he jumped out alive. We were amazed at this performance. A thorough physical examination of his heart and other organs showed no abnormality.

I talked to him alone and inquired how he succeeded in these unnatural performances. He said: "If you have a full mental control over all nerves and muscles, you can develop a complete physical control over all your nerves and muscles. There is no such thing as voluntary and involuntary functions. The heart should stop or go on at your bidding, the lungs should function as you desire. The brain must obey your orders. People do not realise the powers they could develop by renunciation, dedication, prayer, meditation and submission to God's will."

He offered to teach me this all and make me an expert in these and more of such practices if I join him and remain with him for over a year.

Having no such luck--I requested him to teach me something in the meanwhile. I learnt from him a comfortable sitting posture, a method of meditation and repetition of Lord's name. "Clear

your mind of any ideas of hatred of anyone," he said, "If you hear anything against yourself, feel that perhaps you were much worse than what he said. This, by itself, will help you to become better than what you are. It is by a constant vigil and care that you control your lower tendencies of the mind. Things cannot succeed at once. Keep on trying. If you have any bad luck, any difficulties and any unbecoming behaviour or insults, feel that this also will pass away. Forget it and you will feel calm, cool, collected and joyful." Thus he taught me to bear patiently all injustices, difficulties, insults and terrible shocks.

JAMSHED NUSSERWANJEE

I first met Sri Jamshed Nusserwanjee in Karachi, soon after my posting there in December 1944. It was more or less a friendship at first sight. If he did not visit me. I never failed to visit him at least once a day.

His life was an open book for any one to read. Punctual in habits; he was a rare flower of the business community of Karachi who spent the major part of his income in charity. As soon as he was up and ready to go out in the morning, his palatial house was full of the poor and the needy,-people in clean clothes who had nothing to eat, people in rags who lost their all in the world and people whose friends or relations were ill in the hospital but had no means to buy drugs or food or to pay for special nursing, people who were unjustly dragged to courts for no fault of their own. Sri Nusserwanjee had a kind word for all and gave assistance to every one by way of cash or by things in kind.

So as to meet the contingencies and to satisfy the crowd that comes to him daily, he generally carried one hundred rupees in his pocket in small change and freely distributed it to the deserving people on his daily visits to and back from his office, also visiting the civil hospital on the way. A doctor called out: Jamshed! this poor man needs such and such a medicine; will you kindly give the necessary cash? Or, "O Jamshed, will you please give this woman enough money to buy a special diet for her mother, father, son or brother?" Or, "Will you save this starving child by giving enough cash to buy a special type of diet and milk for a month?" This was the trend in which this noble man was approached daily. The whole town was singing

his praises for being such an unselfish benefactor and philanthropist popular with all.

Sri Nusserwanjee was the Mayor of Karachi for many years, re-elected again and again, in recognition of his devoted and loving services to that city. The state of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation spoke volumes of his work for the people in that great town. He was largely responsible for the scientific planning of the streets, lanes, water supply and drainage systems there.

Though he had a huge palatial building of his own, in actuality he lived very much alone. He lived in one tiny side-room which served as his study, bed, office and sitting room, and slept on a wooden cot on hard boards. He never lost his temper and gave his pleasant smile to everyone and everything.

Sri Nusserwanjee was a very religious man and deeply spiritual. He had made a deep study of the philosophy, history and spiritual thought of all religions, and was of the opinion that:

1. The true prayers of every heart go to one God alone, for no human being can possibly give himself wholly to more than one ideal. Other modes of worship are only on the surface to satisfy a social custom or a passing fancy. But worship shown to beings other than the one God is really futile, though we deceive ourselves with the idea that it ennobles us and forms a channel for His blessings to come to us. This really turns the heart away from its source of comfort to an unreal substitute which does not lead to the goal.

2. We need no one to introduce us to God Who is closer to us than our breath, Who speaks to us, if we will only listen in the

silence of our own heart. For man God's noble child, to worship anything but his Creator is to debase himself and to turn willfully away from his own fine possibilities; even God can do little for such a man till he turns round again and sends the prayers of his heart towards the one who alone is worthy of all his love and adoration.

3. Although those whom unbelievers worship also exist, but they, too, are in need of help; they are also God's servants and depend upon Him for everything. Why should one worry about the gatekeepers or orderlies, when he knows the great King, God inside, and can go straight to Him?

4. To request others for admission to God's court means confusion and delay; perhaps there may be refusal due to jealousy and selfishness. God alone can help us and will certainly help us, if we but ask him sincerely, as He is perfectly kind. Turn to Him, and Him alone, as the last resort-actually the one place where you are sure to succeed. However purer and nobler they may be, others cannot take God's place, as they also are eager to work their way through God's grace for His glory. They may be prayed for, rather than to.

5. A true devotee and a humble seeker will never speak ill of those who, perhaps, wrongfully or unknowingly have taken the worship of God in a different way.

6. The gods, saints, spiritual teachers, even idols of others must never be abused, for evil talk stirs up hatred and in return the holy name of God Himself will be insulted. The practice of truth, sincerity, courtesy and gentleness can only come with the strength which God grants when you start living in Him.

7. By obeying His natural Laws, the whole universe worships God and shows His glory, man too can worship Him by obeying the laws of the spiritual life. As the sun sets or rises, every shadow grows longer as though prostrated on the ground. Let us, therefore, in our hearts prostrate, beside those lifeless shadows, to the Lord of the universe so wonderfully made.

8. God is the Light of heavens and earth. His light is like a lamp in a recess. The lamp is the true religion shining in the dark world, each of whose teachings is universal and so noble that it shines by itself even without the touch of the divine flame of revelation. The lamp is God's inspiration in the human soul, shut in by the wall of the body, which yet shines out with reflected radiance. The oil is the man's conscience which is a good guide at all times. It is the voice of conscience you must heed. It is always as if the Lord is speaking to you, through it.

Jamshed used to say: "Let the body go. Give up clinging to it. Free thyself in mind. The whole object of religion and of ethics is to overcome the animal consciousness in us, confined as it generally is to sex and fear, sleep and food. Give it up! Give up this clinging to the body which is no more important than a mere carcass, and regard it as such at all times. Only the spirit is real. If you think of such immortal thoughts, they lead you to the Lord."

I learnt from him, to try and be bold. Be brave! Be fearless. Be strong. Think that the person you are dealing with is also a mere man like you. So approach him with love in your heart and not with timidity. God's children should never be timid. As your heritage is grand, why should you feel that you are subhuman? We are all direct descendants of God and so we are brothers, in spite of different religions, habits, customs, creeds and colours.

Jamshed once said that the whole secret of spiritual life was character. "To be sincere is to be free. Be loyal to your spiritual inheritance, for, to be loyal is likewise to be free. Let every step you take be a step forward; as you go, go along the highway of life in this manner. You shall feel that you are free. With honesty of purpose, truthfulness and integrity, you can face all men and all situations. Just be true to the self always-always.

"Remember to wash your mind clean from all dross and impurities. Listen carefully to each whisper of your higher nature and seize each message of your inner self. Spiritual opportunity is a rare privilege and comes through the grace of the Lord. Act on it. Never falter, and you will go towards your self-appointed task on the divine path which will be lighted up with dazzling brightness, deeper and more dazzling than many suns.

When Jamshed Nusserwanjee passed away, his funeral was very largely attended by people of all religions and creeds and castes; for, there lived and passed away a true and noble man who really knew the true purpose of his coming to this earth, shared the joys and sorrows of the people among whom he lived humbly.

DR. BANKEY BEHARI

It was during one of my trips to Vrindavan in 1947 that I had the rare fortune of meeting this great Saint of India.

He was living in a tiny little room hardly 6'x6' half way up on the stairs leading to the first floor of a discarded building. He had no furniture. I found him sitting in one corner of the room with a few belongings consisting mostly of books and writing material.

It seemed that he had taken a vow of silence and solitude some years before and spent all his time in prayer and meditation sparing a few hours in going through the scriptures of various religions and creeds and in studying the lives of Sufi, Christian Buddhist and Hindu Saints and mystics so that he may learn to follow their spiritual recipes and precepts.

Having distinguished himself in the legal profession and having successfully conducted many important cases it was amazing that he possessed such a great moral courage which enabled him to discard the worldly comforts, name and fame, in order to take up the life of a recluse.

Along with his achievements and realisation of Godhead he has been able to bring out excellent books in a simple language for the guidance of all sincere seekers-Al-Ghazali, Attar, Teresa, St. John, Swami Ram Tirth, Psalms of Buddhist sisters and brothers to mention a few of them.

During this intense Sadhana for over thirty years and a deep study of Gita and Bhagavata, his life-sketches of saints of Braj, their wooing of poverty, their shunning of publicity, their dislike of pomp and puff has moulded his spiritual life which

has glistened forth into Self-realisation and sincere devotion to Lord Krishna.

I requested him to come out of the seclusion and do something for the suffering humanity instead of remaining busy in his own advancement on the sacred path to God. It was a very pleasant meeting and he wrote answers to all my questions to my entire satisfaction.

During my subsequent visits, I was happy to attend his Satsangas (spiritual meetings) where his highly advanced devotee Sri Sri Krishnaji sang fascinating songs full of devotion and he ended up these daily sacred meetings with his soul-stirring talks. This went on for hours together daily and was largely attended by sincere seekers of all ages.

His comments on the Bhagavad Gita brought him a doctorate of Theology from the Allahabad University---his old Alma-mater. Today he feels that his hands are in the hands of the Lord. He has no need of a boatman to cross the ocean of Samsara when Lord Himself is toeing his boat. He refuses to meet any visitors now and lives in complete seclusion and contemplation. He says that nearness to the Lord is a unique experience and has no desire to see any one. He has lived indoors for the last four years and eschewed all visitors, males, females, foreigners, rich or those in authority expecting the Lord to appear to him in the form he desires most.

One of his great admirers and a well-known Urdu poet puts his achievements in the following lines:

"Marde Kamil yak-be-yak apni vikalat chhorkar

Bindraban men aa gya sab nate rishte tor kar

Prem rang men rang gya duniya se munh ko morkar Khud hi Banka bangya, Banke se rishta jor kar" Translation: This perfect human being suddenly left his legal practice and
went to Vrindavan having broken all worldly relations, Dyed in Divine love having turned his face away from the world;
himself became Banka having established his relationship with Banka (Lord Krishna). Let us leave him alone as he is now wedded to silence and
solitude. He loves all humanity and conveys his blessings to all.

MATA KRISHNA JI

It was a great pleasure to meet this little girl full of Divine fervour, who not only thought of Lord Krishna all the time, but who was completely dedicated to Him and thought of Him constantly night and day. It appears that she came to Vrindavan when still in her teens along with her parents on a few days' pilgrimage. At the time of their departure from Vrindavan she refused to leave. She said that this place was her real home as she thought she had been there in her previous lives. When the parents failed to persuade this little girl to accompany them back to Amritsar, the father rented a house and left his wife and daughter there.

She took a vow of silence and went from one Satsang to another until she decided to attend daily a regular recitation of Shrimad Bhagavata by a Bengali Sadhu. She met many saints and sages while attending this recitation of Bhagavata. One of them Shri Banke Behariji Maharaj attracted her particularly. She felt that the Lord has sent him to her for guidance as a master.

A few years later they started a daily Satsang where Krishnaji sang lovely songs mostly of deep feelings for affection for the Lord and pining to meet Him. This went on for long hours of the day.

Another fact was particularly noticed that she sat facing the wall with a harmonium in front of her. The devotees who attended this Satsang saw her back only-but were deeply moved by the manner of her singing in a lovely voice full of feelings of separation for the Lord.

Except for the period of this religious gathering she kept her vow of silence and never talked to her parents or any one else

throughout the day. Dressed simply in a thick home spun Dhoti and shirt she was fully absorbed in her hard Sadhana. Eventually she adopted Sannyas and started living alone and separate from her people.

She wrote many books. I have read two of them. The Virhan Gopika and Chander Chakori Miran. These two books actually depict her own feelings pining for the Lord; but I know that she has advanced so rapidly that she is constantly living in the presence of her Lord Krishna and her Gurudev.

KUMARI USHA BHATNAGAR

It was delighted to meet this saintly lady in 1947 when she was the Principal of Sanatan Dharma school at Ambala Cantt. Her house was really a temple where prayers and devotional songs were going on morning and evening. Her father was a great devotee of Hanuman and daily prayers were started under his guidance from 4 A.M. or even earlier. Every member of the household-boys and girls-took an active part in Kirtan and Satsang. Some of her colleagues in the school also joined this daily Satsang.

Whenever I visited this school, I was impressed by the spiritual atmosphere in all classes due to the character and the inclination of this wonderfully spiritual Principal.

A few years later she resigned from the school and started a school privately in her own house. This was due to the fact that she wanted to give more time to her Sadhana and special meditation and prayers in solitude. One thing impressed me greatly. It was her having no love for money or worldly things. She kept all her money in a small attache case and expected every one of her friends and co-workers to take as much out of it as it was needed by them.

I have very widely travelled all over the world but have never seen or heard of anyone permitting all and sundry to help themselves with her money. It was surprising that none of her companions took any undue advantage of it and even the teachers in her private school carried on their duties sincerely as they were certain to get whatever they needed from this attache case. Later on she wanted to cut her off even from this work and retired to Vrindavan living the life of a devotee

without any hearth or home and devoted in the service of Lord Krishna throughout the day. She lives in a small house, the main room being occupied by a small statue of Lord Krishna. She feels that. He is very much alive. She gets up early in the morning and makes tea for the Lord. The worship goes on all day, now breakfast, now lunch, now afternoon tea and now dinner. During hot days she uses hand-fan for the Lord nothing for herself during winter she keeps Him comfortable with warm bed-clothes. It is a great joy to watch this young lady spending all day in the worship of the Lord. Satsangas and Kirtans go on regularly and daily.

When in meditation and trances she suddenly starts writing fascinating Lilas of Lord Krishna. These Lilas which are her own original thoughts while in meditation have now filled a whole box. She refuses to publish them. Some common friends have read them and they say that these stories of the Lord show the depth of sincere and Divine Love and devotion for the Lord of her heart.

She leads a very simple life full of spiritual ideas and has now with her some of the other friends from Ambala doing regular Sadhana.

I consider them to be like sincere Gopikas of Lord Krishna's time whose only desire is to meet their Lord. I found them all noble, selfless, poor and full of Love and devotion to the Lord spending every moment of their lives in meditation, worship and prayer for the Lord whom they feel to be with them at all times; I wish I could mention their names but they do not Amin wish it.

Anyone visiting Brindavan will hear of these Gopikas of the Lord, highly cultured and educated, who have adopted a life of poverty and devotion.

KUMARI VIMAL

it is a very strange coincidence that I met this noble child when she was only eleven years old at Dharmji's house in 1946.

From her attractive and pretty face, I was impressed by her peace of mind and tranquillity she spread all round in such a young age. She came in contact with Dharmji when still very young. She served her for over 25 years with a single-minded devotion. She not only stitched all her clothes and purchased them, but washed them, ironed them and made them ready for her.

All this selfless service was like that of a real devotee. To be with her and serve her was her greatest desire. Having known her intimately for over twenty years, it is my considered opinion that she advanced rapidly towards Self-realisation. It was a rare phenomenon to see a young girl who had conquered all desires for sense-objects. There was nothing she wanted in the world than the company of Saints, hearing stories of saints, sages and Rishis of yore.

She was gifted with a lovely voice and knew dozens of songs which she always sang with emotion. The theme of these songs was always an intense desire to meet the Lord. She had dedicated her energies in true search for Lord Krishna. This eternal feeling of love, in my humble opinion, she acquired by constantly thinking of unselfish and true service to her master, friend and companion Dharmji. Even on being hard pressed by her well-to-do parents, brothers and relatives she declined to marry as she was in love only with the Lord.

In addition to her duties in the Government Service, all her spare time was spent in the contemplation of her Lord Krishna.

Her last words before she passed out at such a young age was 'Hey Prabhu Ji.' When her heart-broken father took her ashes for immersion into the sacred Jamna at Vrindavan all the Gopika friends of her joined in emotionally putting these sacred ashes into the river.

Even that Self-realised Saint Dr. Banke Behari who lives in solitude and silence was told of this by Shri Mata Krishnaji. The ashes were placed in his room with no one nearby. He saluted them and blessed them.

She was regarded as a nightingale of Vrindavan and all the devotees regarded her as one of them. There was nothing she could not do for them in sincere and selfless service.

MOTHER KRISHNA BAI OF ANAND ASHRAM

It was in 1951 when Swami Ram Das came to stay with me for 3 or 4 days in Delhi that I had the honour of meeting Mother Krishna Bai, who accompanied him. I had heard of her and read all about her in 1938 and later when I met Swami Ram Das.

When she became a widow-she left her hearth and home and her children and went out in search of the Lord without whom she thought she had no desire to live. Eventually she started attending prayer-meetings of Swami Ram Das, where she found her peace of mind and thought that she had met her master who would lead her towards her cherished goal.

With selfless work in the Ashram and sincere devotion to the Lord and her Guru she made very rapid progress towards her ideal of becoming one with the Lord. Those who have come in contact with this rare manifestation of the Divine, consider her to be a Self-realised Yogini, the like of whom is seldom found in the world.

Very humble and devoted she spends all her time for the care of everyone who visits the Anand Ashram.

Having spent many decades in controlling all selfless work in her heavenly abode, she has set an example to us all in order to show us the sacred path by which one can reach the goal of final union with the Infinite.

Her beautiful, smiling face and her deep-set melting eyes are obviously full of the feelings of one who has united herself permanently with the Infinite.

She is now administering the Ashram with strong but selfless devotion and love. The Soul of Swami Ram Das is blessing her from Heaven.

YOGI ROSHAN NATHJI

There was an old Yogi Bawa Chhanichar Nath living a few miles away from Jammu in the jungle. No one was able to predict his age. An old man from the village nearby saw him day after day when he was hardly seven or eight years old. This old man is now 95 years old and said that the Bawa he saw almost 90 years ago was almost in the same physical health as now. He hardly meets anyone.

An old lady-disciple of the Bawa living in the village nearby was universally called Mataji. The Bawa told one fine day about 50 years ago that a son has been born to him also. The mother thought the old Sadhu had gone off his head-how could a son be born to him when he never married and is now more than one hundred years old.

The Sadhu said "He means that a real disciple is now born somewhere that he will visit me when he is 20 years old." The old woman did not believe this, but asked, "How shall I recognise him when he visits you. The Bawa replied, "He will have a Dhoti worn in a village-fashion, a loose shirt, a turban on his head and a bamboo-stick on his shoulder supporting his food tied in a bit of white cloth."

Nathji was the son of a canal S.D.O. who was stationed at the Mangla Head from where the upper Jhelum canal takes off. The boy used to go often to the canal head, sit in the boat lying there tied by a steel rope to the bank of the artificial lake from where the canal takes off.

One day, the Mataji in the village near Jammu almost 250 miles away from Mangla head saw that the Bawa was wet though sitting at his own place. He said that his kid had fallen into the

lake almost 50 feet deep and he had to save his life and so he was wet through.

The lady was amazed and said "You are sitting here and how could I believe that you went 250 miles to save this boy from drowning, but your wet clothes prove it so. The Bawaji said that there was suddenly a strong wind, the boat slightly turned upside down and the kid fell into the deep lake. I had to rush and save his life as he has to do great things." The Bawa never met the boy, but it seemed that he remained mentally with him and overshadowed every movement of the boy and protected him.

Nathji too felt the presence of someone whom he could not see almost all the time-when he was growing.

Sometimes he heard voices asking him to go out and do things without ever meeting the person or power physically. When his father was transferred to Mianwali and he was put to school the teacher forced him to start learning Arabic, as almost all the boys in his class were Mohammedans and were taught this language. He learnt only three lessons. He got disgusted refusing to learn any more of this language and he left the class. The headmaster met him outside, to whom he complained of this. As the headmaster did not wish any boy to learn any language against his will, he sent the boy to the Sanskrit teacher.

The Bawa sitting 300 miles away and having no connection with the boy or his parents and having never met any of them told the mother living in his village that he had learnt the 3 Arabic lessons as he was forced to learn Arabic. Right up to the end of his days, the Bawa could repeat these lessons.

From a perusal of the above it would appear that the Bawa had gone beyond time, space and causation and had kept his mental companionship with his boy. The boy or his parents knew nothing about it except that the boy always felt some presence with him constantly night and day and probably supervised all his movements.

The only strange thing the boy felt was a feeling of restlessness and sometimes a little consciousness that someone was waiting for him.

When 8 years old Roshan Nath heard that his brother was very ill and had lost consciousness. He wept bitterly and prayed to God to prolong his life for 10 years. Strange to say that his prayer was granted. Ten years later when Young Roshan Nath was 18 years old, he heard that his brother had fallen ill suddenly with a serious attack of typhoid fever. Two days later he was found to be deeply unconscious and pronounce dangerously ill. Young Roshan knew that 10 years had elapsed and nothing would save his life. He died on the 3rd day. He heard some hidden voice over his shoulders--you asked for 10 years of his life. He got 10 years." Roshan never cried and it was noticed by his parents and other relatives who did not like this at all.

Now, Young Roshan felt that he was not capable of studying any more. He was always having a very disturbed life expecting something to happen. He used to neglect his studies and leave his home-sometimes in the middle of the night and wander about aimlessly.

During his aimless wanderings, his most favourite place was the only temple at the cremation ground where he used to sit for long hours, perhaps doing nothing.

His people got disgusted with him and his grand father scolded him and gave him a hiding sometimes. The old man dreamt one night that an old woman in red clothes appeared before him and warned him not to beat this boy any more. If he repeats him scolding and beating, it will go very badly against his life. Henceforth Nathji was left alone.

His desire for study was no longer there. He started losing all interest in his class-room, his lectures and his usual routine in the college. He lived in the Boarding house of the college, he went to the class-room but suddenly left it and wandered away to the nearest public garden where he spent hours together busy in doing nothing. Sometimes this restlessness and this wandering continued day after day, month after month and year after year till he started shouting, "O yea, the unknown where are you? I need your presence."

Occasionally he felt a presence and heard voices but he kept aloof and avoided company of his class-fellows.

Once he had a trance lasting for 40 days. On another occasion he continued talking to anybody and everybody for four days.

Having left the college against the will of the parents-he wandered about aimlessly and people thought he had gone off his head.

During all this period the Bawa near Jammu followed his movements mentally and never lost hold on him. It seems that he was preparing him for the life this bright boy was destined to lead and for which he had taken birth.

A little while later-while on his usual wanderings-he fell in the company of some patriotic young men who were infused with the spirit of violence for turning out the British. He accompanied a couple of these friends to Jammu from Sialkot where it was feared that the police was after them.

During a few days stay at Jammu he visited this great sage Bawa Chhanichar Nath along with his friends. They went inside the Kutir to meet him but he remained outside.

The Bawa asked him to come in--but he refused to go in and remained standing in the fields outside.

The Bawa told the Mataji after the boys left him that his "Jatak" (a son-future disciple) had come. The mother said that she saw no boy in the dress he had described twenty years earlier.

The Bawa said, "Yes; it was the same boy whom I have been guiding for 20 years and he will certainly come back next day in the clothes, he had told her about twenty years ago.

It is more strange than fiction to know that next day he was keen to go and meet the Bawaji, his future Master and Guru although he knew nothing about what was in store for him.

As all his clothes were wet, he borrowed a Dhoti from a friend, a turban from another and a shirt which was clean and white. He picked up a bamboo stick to which he tied his food for the day and started walking for about 10 miles odd towards the Kutiya of the Bawaji.

The mother saw him and felt very moved as the statement of the old Bawa made twenty years earlier had come true.

A few lines in Nathji's own words regarding his future relations with this saint will not be out of place. They are:---

"It will be of no avail to you to know who I am, where I was born and what I did to come on to the path of Yoga. I will, however, narrate today how I met my Guru for the first time. It is a strange story-stranger than fiction-and hard to believe, as miracles usually are unless faith has softened your doubting clay and it is ready to be moulded into the right form.

"It was in the year 1932 when I was very young and very restless. The cause of restlessness I did not know. That made me all the more uneasy. Strange thoughts used to cross my mind. I knew not what it was, still I used to sit in some sort of meditation. I used to recite one or two Mantras that I happened to know. It was my only Sadhana. But I did shut myself for many hours in some secluded place and I used to like the quietude. Here it is how I met my Guru!

Here I come down a path, lost in my own thoughts, after a few hours of meditation. I am coming back home. I enter the house. I notice a post card lying on the ground. I pick it up and just glance through it. It is not addressed to me. But at the end of the letter there is a sentence addressed to me. "We went to see Bawaji. He remembers you."

"Here I may mention earlier I had met my Guru but at that time I was not conscious of the meeting. You may as well say I did not notice him. We meet so many people so many times and are hardly even aware of them. But we rarely meet someone to know him fully and truly."

"Still lost in my thoughts, I cross the courtyard, go into my room and start packing up my things. I pick up the suit-case and walk out of the room. I am startled by a shriek. 'Oh' it is my mother. She is crying. Slowly I come to think of my father. Yes;

he has been ailing for the last few days. Another heart-rending shriek. I walk up to the bed. Look at the seriously ill parent and walk out of the house again."

"After some time I find myself riding a bus that will take me to the nearest Railway station. The train arrives. I get into it and am travelling on to the place where my Guru lives. Half way somewhere I remembered that father was ill, but soon I forgot all about it.

"While writing now, I am myself surprised at that sort of 'callous' attitude but I have nothing to say beyond what I have written."

I reach the destination, stay for the night with a relation. Next day I go to meet Bawaji, my Guru. I meet him and I am with him for some time. Then I come back to the town for the night. For seventeen days I stayed there and visited my Guru every day. What happened during those seventeen days. Enough to say that I learnt to prostrate before my Guru and willingly too.

"After seventeen days I travel back: I reach my home-town Railway station. I get into the bus. And suddenly a feeling of sorrow and grief grips my heart.

"What did I do? I left my dying father in the hospital and came away! I did not write even a single letter all these days. I was in tears. The bus was on the move. In vain, I looked around to find out if there was any familiar face. There was none. It was hardly fourteen miles to go; but it looked as if it would take me ages to reach the hospital.

At last the bus stops. With the suit-case in my hand, I walk up to the hospital. The fear is in my mind. I am terribly scared. Up to the steps I go and at every step I am preparing myself to hear

the worst. I am climbing the last steps now. The doctor is sitting attending to the outdoor patients. He looks up, gives a smile and is busy again. The smile reassures me a little. He says "So you come back! Go and meet your father." I drag myself tardily up to the private ward. I open the door a little-a little more. My father is sitting up in his bed, I have a relief." "I felt suffocated. Some sort of feeling seemed to smother me. "You have come back." I want to go back home. I feel much better now:-Before leaving, I met the doctor, I wanted to apologise. But he out smart me and said, I too have my Guru. I know what it is when the call comes. The father you were going away from your ailing father to reach your master, the better he began to feel minute by minute, hour by hour. By noon next day I found him completely out of danger."...It was my turn now to cut him short and say: "On that day? Well, I was knocking at my master's door...Om."

In spite of this wandering lust-night, morning and noon he never got tired. He was on his feet most of the time or on a bicycle occasionally. He always left that he was in search of someone. It was usual for him to wash and dress up and hurry out as though he had an important appointment to keep.

He often felt happy, very happy, beaming with joy and smiling most of the time, but sometimes sad and would cry out without any reason, Sometimes he was in the mortal fear of being along and thus kept himself busy meeting friends.

It seemed that Providence had conspired with an unknown man to throw him into a life of seclusion so that he could start loving him. Sometimes he shut himself in a room and sat in meditation the whole day long without knowing that he was on the right path directed by forces unknown to him.

He says "One day a man, somehow opened the door of the room in which I was sitting quietly. I was so much engrossed in meditation that I did not notice his arrival. The man ran out screaming in fright. I came to know about it when one day he asked me, "What is it that you practise, is it some black magic?" Or are you trying some supernatural power? How do you know I asked. He replied "I chanced upon the place you were sitting in and was surprised to see you covered all over with something black. That frightened me and I ran out screaming." I had nothing to say. He knew nothing about supernatural powers but used to sit down regularly--with eyes open in the beginning, reciting a Mantra. What happened next-he had no idea and forgot himself completely, except for short breaks occasionally. It was usual for him to sit all the day long-neither feeling hungry nor thirsty having a meal in the evening only.

He himself writes: "The nights found me restless. Sometimes I would be on my knees. I would fold my hands and say, "O Yea, the unknown! When shall I find Thee." Then I would experience a strange feeling of being in the presence of someone. I would even feel the touch but could see no one. Sometimes I felt someone holding my hand but no visible signs of anyone being there! The nightly rendezvous with the unknown remained a secret all along."

Almost every night, he used to drop down from the terrace on the ground and run like one possessed, towards this meeting place and a little before sunrise he would rush back to the terrace and get into bed again.

At that time it never occurred to him that there could be such a sacred relationship between the two of them. How often destiny

let them in complete silence without so much as dropping a slight hint as to what was in store for them both.

Once when not too well-he was trying to reach the abode of his Guru. He felt exhausted and it was hot. He looked into the sky and then bowed low He found himself saying, "Bawaji".

Lo! suddenly a cloud appeared and he saw a patch of shadow on the ground a little ahead of himself. He walked on to that heavenly shade and felt better, cool and comfortable. Now he walked under the canopy of the cloud above. He distinctly remembers still that there was a single patch of cloud overhead and the shadow was moving as he moved on! He thus covered all the distance without any discomfort and he never suffered from that burning sensation again. He knocks at the door. Bawaji opens the door and leads him on to the sacred fireside. He sits down a little away from him. "So you have come". He said, "that is good. How about something to eat" he said.

He looks round and notices a brick-work shrine that Bawaji has in his Kutiya. It is a mystic symbol. There are two rooms and a verandah. Bawaji is sitting in the verandah where a fire is burning. Saying that he is hungry he comes out and sits down. Before he knew, he is sitting in a meditative pose lost in deep meditation. It is now late in the evening and Bawaji calls him by name. He struggles back to consciousness but gets up and walks on to the door of the Master and enters. He soon leaves for the town-the master asking "Will you come tomorrow." "I shall try"-he replied and looked at the bicycle tied to it is his lunch basket still untouched.

Bawaji never asked anyone to come again. Even a prince had to wait for nine long years before Bawaji agreed to meet him.

Next morning he gets on his bicycle again and finds Bawaji standing in the doorway waiting for him. He is by his side at once full of joy, peace and the thrill he feels.

For a whole fortnight he spent the days with his master Bawaji but came to rest at Jammu where people thronged to hear him in large numbers. They saw a special glow over his handsome face. He appeared to them to be a great Mahatma and a Yogi. He talked continuously in the evenings and mornings on every type of spiritualism, and answered questions. The audience seems to be satisfied. A fortnight passed quickly in delivering lectures on Vedanta and Yoga. This knowledge was not for his own creation. The thoughts came like a river in spate and the thoughts were of his master-he was only the mouth piece although the master was miles away. Such was Bawaji's power. He decided to return home and got into the train. He stood in the doorway waving to those who had come to bid him goodbye. Before the train took a sharp turn he looked out and saw a man walking along the Railway track. It was Bawaji, How strange. He could not have come from his Kutiya he never leaves his abode. But it was the same tall and forceful personality with the usual loin cloth on and the same majestic face. How strange. How unbelievable. How could he be in two places?

In younger days the Bawa was very strong and used to carry big trees for his sacred fire. People saw him daily for many weeks standing in deep waters of the Chenab river nearby in severe winters from early dawn to sunset. He seemed to have conquered the elements and he was above the pairs of opposites. He was held in deep respect and awe in the countryside where people seldom visited him. He blessed them

all. People held the saint in great reverence. He spent many days in the river even when it was in spate and walked home to his cottage through the flooded fields.

No one dared to go to his abode or even near him. He never went to any village in the area even for a pinch of salt. All that the villagers knew was that he lived somewhere in the marshy jungle.

Once they thought that the jungle was set on fire by someone.

One of the villagers swam across the river with the forest guard. Both of these wandered through the thick jungle and came upon a clearing. They stood aghast and were frightened to see seven circles of burning fire and a man sitting peacefully in the centre of them all. His eyes were closed and he was in a state of deep meditation or a trance. They hid themselves in the bushes and waited in the sweltering heat for a long time. Soon after sunset-they say that the man (Bawaji) walked out of the fire and proceeded further away. He stopped and looked back-they went up to him and paid their respects. He blessed them and warned them never to come again to this place.

The villagers relate many wonderful tales about the miracles

Bawaji performed. One of them lost his cattle in the flood. He was suddenly reminded of Bawaji, who lived nearby but his abode was under water-only the tops of the trees were visible. He prayed to Bawaji before plunging in the flooded river. It was perhaps by his grace and Yoga powers that he reached the spot where Bawaji was. He was still standing in the water. His head was only visible and he was in deep trance calm serene, and perhaps lost in the love of God.

They did not dare to disturb him, but a little while later he opened his eyes and said, "Why have you come?" "To take you to the village" one of them said. He agreed and by God's grace the party reached the village all safe.

Everyone knew that Bawaji was a great Yogi. It is usual to talk of the saints in terms of the miracles they performed and the difficulties they had to face while trying to live a saintly life.

When Nathji talked of his Guru, the Bawaji to his grandfather- the grandfather said that he knew him many a year ago, and that he was a great Yogi and they decided to visit him again. The grandfather related the following, "I met Bawaji in a dense forest on the top of a hill far away. I was young and I had gone deep into the forest for hunting. Suddenly I spotted a tiger. I was terrified. As I hastened to climb up a free and hide myself in the foliage, the tiger came and settled down under the same tree and I felt frightened all the more. Soon after, I saw a tall and stalwart Sadhu coming my way. I climbed down the tree and ran up to him. I touched his feet and begged for his blessings."

Once Nathji asked him about his age. But he replied that he was not a day older than him. He never enquired about his age again, Although Bawaji never claimed to be a learned man people heard him often talking in Sanskrit and discussing various ideas with learned scholars who remarked that they have seldom seen a more learned man than Bawaji.

Nathji never knew consciously that someone was waiting for him somewhere, but Bawaji knew. Nathji's life was an open book to him. Sitting there in his own Kutiya he gave him the name that he bears i. e., Roshan Nath only when he was 21 days

old and hundreds of miles away from him. Bawaji decided when he should go to school and when he should end his studies. The day he decided that he was not to study any more- -he lost all interest in his books The Bawaji was thinking aloud one day and said, "The boy need not study anymore; it is enough and from then on he began to wait for him.

Nathji tried to escape from Bawaji. But escape was not possible. It was impossible for him to run away. Sitting in his Kutiya, he would call out to him and lo! he would run on to him as if drawn by an invisible rope tied round his neck. The cold of the winter night or the heat or the summer day could not hold him back. He could not feel restful anywhere; a restlessness which he coud hardly bear-sometimes happy, sometimes terribly upset.

Disgusted with the world, relatives and friends and fed up with the ways of the world, he at last knocked at the door of his master who said "you may come in. But on the condition that you will not leave the place till you have given me Samadhi with your own hands." He walked in.

This was not of his own free will; it is obvious. He never thought that anyone could turn to God on his own initiative, and that talk of surrender unto His will is all tall talk. One does not surrender even a bit of his own free will. God wills it always.

From a perusal of the above it would appear that Nathji is not there by his own free will. He was born for it.

Those who know him would readily agree that he is outwardly like any of us-you will not find that he looks like a long-faced, serious type of a Yogi-but a worldly person who has a family and lives life vigorously. He is a great human being who spends

all his time and energy in the selfless service to humanity-now here, now there and now everywhere to assist a suffering friend or one to whom a grave injustice has been done. He is a prince among men, among Yogis and among saints. He has princes as his admirers and disciples but is the humblest of all. He loves to share his experience with those who wish to lead a spiritual path. He has no objection to anyone who wishes to attend his special Sadhana on Sundays or on any day convenient to them. He has developed his own method of Yoga Sadhana which he is ever ready and happy to teach all sincere seekers. His doors are always open to all without any formality. Once you are in touch with him you need not worry any more about anything. He is always out to assist you however difficult or troublesome the task may be. He has always given his best to not visit him once. all. He will visit you a dozen times to help you even if you do not visit him once.

Nathji, in my opinion, inherits the soul of his perfect Master without his own desire to lead that life. His life is a perfect blending of all that is best in our culture and our way of life.

Nathji never pokes his nose in any one's way of life however interested he might be. He does not impose his opinions on others and lest every one lead his own life silently without any unpleasant criticisms or suggestions.

He sincerely believes that all guidance comes from God and that he is only an example and stimulus, chosen by the Lord to guide those who sincerely wish it.

Nathji has told me many a time that the words that he speaks by mouth or writes on paper fall like pouring rain sometimes without any power of his own to stop them flow.

Every word he writes, touches the innermost recesses of a seeker's heart as his ideas and his thoughts are based on his own experience at such a young age and he seems to feel the taste of that sweetness which God's nearness can alone make it possible. Actually he is ever absorbed in God and feels that there are never any obstacles in anyone's path toward God if the sincerity of purpose is there. He knows nothing but the love and the mercy of God. He teaches us to have faith in His love, grace and mercy. As I said before, he is of the opinion that the only one who can teach a man to find God is God Himself alone.

"Have a sincere faith in Him" he says as faith in Him is ultimately the only key to the universe. When this contact with God deepens and becomes more firm, the cloud thins. In proportion as the cloud gets opaque, the experience of God opens out inside you as a terrific emptiness, an emptiness and purity of your own faculties produced in you by a created effect of God's eternal love.

These effects are intensified by the light of understanding, infused in your soul by the spirit of God and raising it suddenly into an atmosphere of dark, breathless clarity in which God, though completely baffling all your natural understanding becomes somehow obvious. Come! let us move upto His Light. Let us live in the sublimity of that divine song for this is what hearts pray for when they cry, "Thy will be done.'

Roshan Nathji keeps himself very busy, yes, very busy in selfless service for others.

"A big Yajna is held every year on the 29th, 30th and 31st December at his Kutiya near Jammu where hundreds gather year after year to pay homage to him and in the sweet memory

of his Master Bawaji a day is spent in feeding the ladies of the countryside, another in feeding the Brahmins and a third one in feeding the men. An all-night Satsang, Kirtan and Bhajan on the 31st starting from almost sunset to the next day-break in a severe cold weather, outside, in the open under a canopy around a colossal pit where fire burns all night.

It is impossible to describe the religious fervour of the devotees from the humblest village folk to the highly civilised people from various part of our country.

Nathji goes from one devotee to another to see if he is comfortable and happy. He is the one moving spirit amongst the thousands in this annual function which he presides with distinction, kindness; and sweetness he is the source of all the activities there. You are busy all night in Kirtan, singing and in deep thought and you forget the elements, you forget the cold, and you forget the rain till the day-break announces to one and all the end of the rare spiritual feast given to you silently and with deep affection.

Old ladies, Old men serve you. No one is forgotten-it is a rare feast of unselfishness and love in a jungle buzzing with activities once a year and a union of hearts under Nathji's loving guidance and leadership without any advertisement. Hundreds of clothes are distributed to deserving men, women and children and food more than sufficient without any knowledge of number of guests. Where does it come from? I have no answer.

KUMARI VIMAL

I had the honour of meeting this noble and gifted person when she was only about 15 years old.

Her beautiful face full of smiles, reflected the purity of her heart. Her voice was deep and pleasant and she had a natural gift of singing songs in Lord's praises and, the pangs of seperation from Him.

The shining glow on her pink and healthy young face showed that she had already attained a depth of feeling and affection for the Lord rarely seen in a person so young.

It seemed that she had developed a wonderful control over her mental processes and she had conquered her turbulent sense-organs.

It appears that she must have done a lot of spiritual Sadhanas in her previous births resulting now into a steady personality which remains calm, cool and collected at all times. She has a rare charm and winning manners.

it was through God's special favour that she came in contact with Dharmji when she was only about eleven years old. The love and devotion for the Lord in Dharmji which she noticed day after day developed first a deep attraction towards her. Tventually she kept her company for long hours and started looking after her physical needs.

Dharmji was constantly absorbed in her usual moods of prayer and love-trances, while young Vimal kept a loving and sincere companionship with her. She guessed and fulfilled all her physical needs, and served her and her family more or less constantly for twenty-five years.

This devoted and selfless service produced a feeling of dedication and devotion of a very high order in her. She led a dedicated life from then onwards with a real submission and surrender to the will of the Lord.

She was very popular in many Satsangas and Kirtans where people enjoyed her sincere and loving songs about Lord Krishna whether in Delhi or Vrindavan, Mathura or anywhere else.

She knew many songs of devotion and prayer by heart. Her loving actions to please the Lord were very appealing and impressive. In regular weekly Satsangas of Dharmji she was the life of the meeting and her songs raised the feeling of the devotees to a very high stage of pining for a vision of the Lord.

She was a regular visitor to the Dadh Seva Ashram on her yearly vacation along with Dharmji. Washing all her clothes, ironing them or stitching new ones was her usual selfless and self-imposed duty which she performed in a cheerful manner.

She also assisted us in the activities of the Sivananda medical Organisation at Dadh by serving the patients.

She visited Sivananda Ashram and the Divine Life Society once with her father and paid homage to the Swamiji.

During the teacher's strike in Delhi early in 1968 she took an active part and stopped all noise and unnecessary shouting of slogans. She collected a large number of them in a nearby temple and led Kirtans, singing of songs and prayers to the Lord fervently, so that the strike may be successful. This produced a healthy spiritual impression on everyone. Her popularity amongst the teachers and students was marked.

She dropped her mortal body soon after a very short illness. Her last words were "Mere Prabhuji"-my Lord!

Her father took her ashes to Vrindavan so that all the present day "Gopikas"-her friends and companions might pay their last homage. All of them dropped her ashes into the sacred Yamuna bit by bit and some saints and Sadhus, who admired her spiritual attainments at such a young age also prayed for peace to her great soul during this ceremony.

THE BAPAK

It was just a matter of chance that this great modern saint Happened to be in Delhi. A spiritual lady friend accompanied me to the talk of this great saint from Indonesia, who was staying with one of his devotees at Moti Bagh.

As he did not know English and could only speak in the Idonesian Arabic, his son-in-law was trying to explain the Principles of Subud (Sushil Budhi Dhama), which he started.

I was really impressed by the personslity and the spiritual glow on the face of the Bapak (Father) as they called him.

His teaching was simple, his followers could be Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs. People of all countries and religions could be members of his movement without changing their ideas or principles or even the manner of their Divine worship.

The 'Latihan' exercise, as I heard and read about and later practised under his direction was really a 'purification' process besides being essentially an act of worship of God. I felt convinced that these movements do the shaking off the mental dirt that accumulates in all parts of the human being owing to our continued wrong living. The removing of dust collected on long pieces of cloth by giving them a thorough shaking is a familiar fact; so also is the fact that if after waking after a long sleep we find our joints stiff; we get rid of the foreign obstructions by brisk movements involving the use of these joints. We remove the mental stiffness also in a similar way.

I was assured that I had the good fortune of having been 'opened' by the great saint Bapak himself and that I had received the contact when he touched me; that this opening is

not invariably accompanied by movements which in many cases do not occur for several months together, depending upon the sincerity of the individual and his strength of the mind to leave everything to God. To him God is and should always be felt nearer to his heart and therefore he has to completely surrender and submit to His will. The pride, the vanity and the conceit is the greatest stumbling block, as I was foolishly expecting some special treatment from God, some special kind of grace, but there is a higher law than that of our wills, that regulates everything in this world. The feeling of humility is therefore essential for any spiritual progress. The Bapak insisted that faith comes to those who become meek and humble and those start feeling that He as our real Father will always come to our aid if we love Him and love Him alone.

Many friends, I know, have become convinced that some of the ailments have gradually been cured by this regular worship.

The Subud movements are very curious, independent of your will and not at all initiated by you. You stand aside, though conscious, looking on them as a spectator with a film before you, unfolding itself, in its own way. This would certainly strike one with a nature and experience like mine, as a miracle would. I have always tried to have a firm faith in God but my realisation of this power, in this intimate personal way, with my utter helplessness in His hands, staring at me, would have been of a different order. It could have made me mad.

Subud has done two things for me, really very important. Exposed my pride and saved me from a possible disaster.

But that is not all. A human being has many parts in his system to be purified, many rooms in his big house to be swept clean.

In my case it appears that my brain, with its easy uncontrolled thinking has needed an urgent and immediate cleansing.

This regular worship especially in the company of other devotees who believe in such a contact with God individually has been of a very great help. Although starting their individual "Latihan", at a given time, the worship is entirely personal, performed in silence, without disturbing the rest of the brothers: The mind and intelligence watch as if standing outside the soul who is under the control of the higher power, its Father.

A man asked Bapak: "How to conquer Pride" He replied:

(1) If a person sings your praises in front of you and if you feel happy within-you have failed to get rid of your ego.

(2) If a person curses you for your faults and your shortcomings, and you try to justify your actions and try to assure him that you are faultless you are full of conceit still.

(3) If a person talks ill of you to another person giving details of your shortcomings and he informs you of what he heard and you defend yourself trying to prove that you are above those faults-you have failed to control your pride.

God being your real Father, watches your actions continously and knows whether you are a sincere devotee or not or whether you are entangled in the meshes of the world or not.

Bapak usually dressed in the clean European fashion has followers in almost all the countries of the world-who have held 'Subud' congresses in Japan, Europe and America. He insists on people dedicating themselves, submitting entirely to God and carrying out their worldly duties in the spirit of surrender to His will.

Although a devout Muslim himself-he has an International centre in his home town in Indonesia-where all questions are answered and replies given to all queries to the satisfaction of all his devotees all over the world.

It is said that when he was young he got his inspiration from God Himself and he automatically started this mode of worship without any previous knowledge of the nearness of the

Lord Almighty.

The Divine Realisation came to him automatically. There is no explanation as to why and how.

One of his devotees a Swiss Count says that:

"(1) To bring the surrender of oneself to God in one's particular times of worship to Him is the beginning of the first step. (2)

But man's spiritual progress will not advance unless surrender percolates through to his life at other times and begins to permeate it. (3) A man who might say "I surrender to

my utmost at my times
of worship" but who at other times retains unchanged his own self-will, has reached a barrier to be surmounted. For the inner and outer must be in harmony for happiness, and attempts at surrender within, while leaving the outside as it was will impede a man; so that he will be halted and unable to receive more even at his time of surrender. (4) A man's attitude to his

external life and the events that take
place for him, as also to other people and their behaviour towards him must in due course be permeated by his surrender and submission to God.

(5) One who submits himself to the will of God accepts all that may come to him in God's creation and from God's creatures.

(6) Through his worship to God, he can be shown what his faults and failings are, if only he sincerely accepts to see them.

(7) Submission brings peace but never complacency.

(8) Submission brings the acceptance of all that may arise, but never a man's own impurities. For God's laws will not be violated "Man cannot fight God."
The closer he comes towards Him, the more he needs to surrender. The closer to the King-the more careful the conduct.

The more intimate with the beloved, the more delicate the behaviour and the more damaging indelicacy.

Yet, for the man who submits himself to God, truly there are no worries and there are no problems.

The solution of problems and the curing of worries lies in the further submission to God; and thereby spiritual progress is ensured."

May all hear,

May all accept to receive,

May all submit and thus receive.

SANT JAGAT SINGHJI

I can still hear the sharp and shrill voice of this great saint who always spoke with authority and sincere belief in the truth he talked about in the undivided Punjab from one village to another and one town to another.

He knew the sacred Sikh scriptures almost by heart and believed that the Sikh religion is only a part of Hinduism. The great Sikh Gurus proclaimed and followed the Hindu religion in all its ceremonial systems of worship except that they aimed at the worship of One God and equality of all castes and tribes, so that trying customs like untouchability one got rid of and the caste system from birth was done away with.

He spread the love and spiritual ferver of Guru Nanak everywhere.

His main theme was that oneness of being and greatness of love are the corner-stones of the Sikh edifice, the 3rd being the relationship of the Guru and his devotee. This literally means a seeker and his Master, both must satisfy the seeking impulse. Of all the relationships known to the human mind, this is the best, happiest and the most perfect. He used to sing in Punjabee frequently:-

Guru and Govind, both are standing (before me). To whose feet shall I attach myself. I am ready to be sacrificed for that Guru who made known to me the name of Govind also Kabir's saying:

"God entangled me in the world

Guru did the disentanglement."

"Nanak the glory of the saints is merged in that of God."

"Nanak, there is an understanding between God and His Saints."

"The supreme Being dwelleth in the hearts of saints."

"Sayeth Nanak-my brothers, there is no difference between God and His saints."

He used to ernphasise the following verse:

"By association with saints, the face becomes bright. By association with saints, all filth is removed. By association with Saints, pride is effaced. By association with saints, divine knowledge is revealed. By association with Saints, all enemies become friends. By association with saints, man feeleth not enmity for any one." What happens to the slanderes of saints is also described at great length, but Nanak says that even a slanderer shall be saved in the company of saints, if they mercifully show their grace.

He used to say that one instant in the company of saints is better than a hundred years of prayer and piety.

Iused to have a pleasant talk with him from the time when I was about 10 years old, as Sant Jagat Singh used to stay in our house in Amritsar, Jammu or Srinagar whenever he visited those places. He was a bold and fearless preacher who preached the gospel of love and advised all Sikh to merge in the Hindu fold as directed by the great ten Gurus who were realised souls.

This energetic and fatigueless selfless worker raised the spiritual ideas of everyone in Punjab.

FAQIR NASIR MOHAMMED

(A Great Sufi Saint)

It was really lucky for me to meet this great and popular saint who had spent all his 76 years in the contemplation of the Lord.

I felt that I was posted at Karachi in 1944 only to have the honour of the company of this great saint who had realised his object years ago and who is now busy in leading people of all religions towards God-which he thought was their birth-right.

I met him at the house of Sri Narain Butani--a great educationist and Principal of the most important College in Sindh-himself an authority on Sufism and a selfless and saintly worker.

(1) Nasir faqir often said that a Faqir is one whose face reminds you of the creator (Khaliq) and on whose meeting-all the past sins are forgiven.

(2) He further used to say that every man should feel that God, in His mercy, has given him the Kingdom of his own life (hayati ki badshahi). It is, therefore, imperative for everyone to constantly feel that he is the 'king' of his own self, he is therefore responsible to himself to that he utilises every moment of his life-breath most carefully. The breaths are the real treasure which should never be wasted.

(3) It is necessary that everyone should chant God's name constantly whether one likes to repeat mentally or loudly. The Lord has infinite names; accept the one given by your master and repeat it with every breath.

(4) Have you ever realised, he asked me, that the breath is the most precious thing in the world dearer than the dearest thing you possess; money cannot buy even one breath. Even if you

suppose that the price of a breath is one rupee, you lose Rupees 24,000 in one day if you have missed repeating God's name in 24 hours.

(5) Why lose a fortune daily by not uttering His name? He used to relate a story that once upon a time a devotee was on his way to visit his master who was living many miles away. On the way he spent a night with another saint. The saint told him that his master had died. The devotee was very upset but reached his master's abode in great agony. On arrival he was surprised to find his master hale and hearty. The devotee related the talk he had during the night before with another saint who informed him that his master had died. The master reflected thoughtfully regarding the state of his mind on the previous night and said that the saint was right as one of his own breaths had gone without uttering God's name which to his mind was a real death. Every one should therefore try not to waste breath by forgetting to remember God.

od (6) He always advised everyone to avoid all useless talk.

The life is short and the sadhana very hard and difficult. Either you talk of the Lord and sing his praises or remain silent. Silence is gold and is always better than any speech.

(7) A real saint, he used to say, is one whose every nerve, every muscle and every hair vibrates with the name of God. If you keep your ear on his chest, you will actually hear a repetition of Lord's name throbbing inside within him. How important it is, therefore, that no one should miss even one breath without Lord's name on his lips.

(8) He had a large following of Muslims and Hindus. Many of these talked of his Divine powers and superhuman miracles. He

also possessed powers of curing many diseases by prayer, however distant a patient might be.

(9) It was a wonderful experience to sit in his heavenly company for hours together without hearing a word. His presence gave mental peace and joy. Silence reigned supreme.

(10) His jungle abode was in the western part of Sindh desert, where he had many tiny single rooms mud-huts for his devotees who desired solitude, meditation, prayer and other Sadhana as suggested by him under his direct guidance. Each hut had a small door and a tiny window on the opposite side. The mud-floor had perhaps a mat.

The system was that a devotee had to live alone in solitude for a fixed number of days. He was to see no one, not even his Sain (master). A rough loaf of bread was thrown into the hut at a fixed time twice daily. Water was kept in an earthen vessel. No other furniture was provided. If and when the devotee had to go out, he had to wrap his head and face with a blanket so that he could see and meet no one. This hard and difficult Sadhana was cheerfully carried out remembering God constantly, night and day dozing off and on as when needed. I met friends who had been through this spiritual practice and found them healthier, more cheerful, more calm, cool and collected, who had controlled their minds and had reduced their thoughts successfully.

There are no fanatics in Sind as people of all religions live peacefully and happily because of the influence of these highly developed spiritual guides called the Sains. They believe that Love is the only way and the Ego is the only enemy in the world.

Nasir faqir's tall form with a pleasant smile and a face reflecting spiritual brilliance proved, if any proof is ever necessary, that God's grace is always flowing in torrents if we make up our minds to take full advantage of it under the guidance of such saints who have realised the Lord.

To control vanity, pride and Ego he said that everyone should try the following four things:

1. Solitude (Tanhai)

2. Silence (Chup)

3. Hunger (Bhook)

4. Sleeplessness (Jaga)

Your Sadhana will be easier if the above four qualities are practised with it as these are really the four weapons to fight against our Ego. A firm faith in the words of the masters is necessary, he always said.

His pet phrase was: Choubees hazar ka kharch hamesha amadani moul na theue. Jis bande no itna ghaata so banda keon kar jeeve.

(The expenditure being 24000 daily and income being nil, a man who suffers so much loss, how can he continue to live?)

I often heard of the famous Persian poem of Rumi in his presence. Its English rendering is as follows:

"Through love bitter things become sweet,

Through love bits of copper are made gold.

Through love stings are as honey

Through love lions are harmless as mice

Through love sickness is health Through love wrath is a mercy Through love the dead rise to life Through love the king becomes a slave." He always said that a master is the real and unselfish guide and
administrator of the seeker. He arranges circumstances for your growth, for the development of the seeds he throws in the soil of your mind and heart. Your weaknesses are made to expose themselves to your view and then drop off; and this is done, not by the word of mouth, but by the circumstances arranged for that purpose. When you went to him and stayed for a while, and though
nothing appears to have happened, you return somewhat changed for the better. This change shows itself afterwards in your way of dealing with things and people. Something occurs between the two hearts, behind the conscious part of yourself you are surprised.

THE AUTHOR

Major-General Sri A. N. Sharmaji has always been very dear to His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, as an example of servicefulness, kindness and goodness. Now he has retired from service in the Army but his services to the poor and the sick continue even now, with the same earnestness of spirit, at his secluded abode in Dadh, in the Kangra Valley. Gen. Sharmaji is accessible to patients at any time. Whether during the day or in the night, and, it should be said with the fairness that he has introduced a divine element into the principle of the medical pledge of a doctor to serve humankind with sympathy and a feeling of the sacredness of all life.

General Sharmaji came into contact with Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj during the early days of the Sivananda Ashram, and since then he has been a devout follower of Sri Gurudev and one of the pillars of the Divine Life Mission. Since his retirement, after a distinguished career of dynamic service to the nation, General Sharmaji organised the Sivananda Medical Organisation at the Headquarters of the Divine Life Society. His contribution towards the fulfilment of its Aims and Objects in this direction has been immense.

But he has another side of his vision of things which took careful note of the lives of contemporary saints and sages and learnt much from a personal contact with them. Gen. Sharmaji's observations on this nobler part of his life which partook of the blessings of holy men are embodied in this book.

Thanks.